

The PASSIONATE HEARTS

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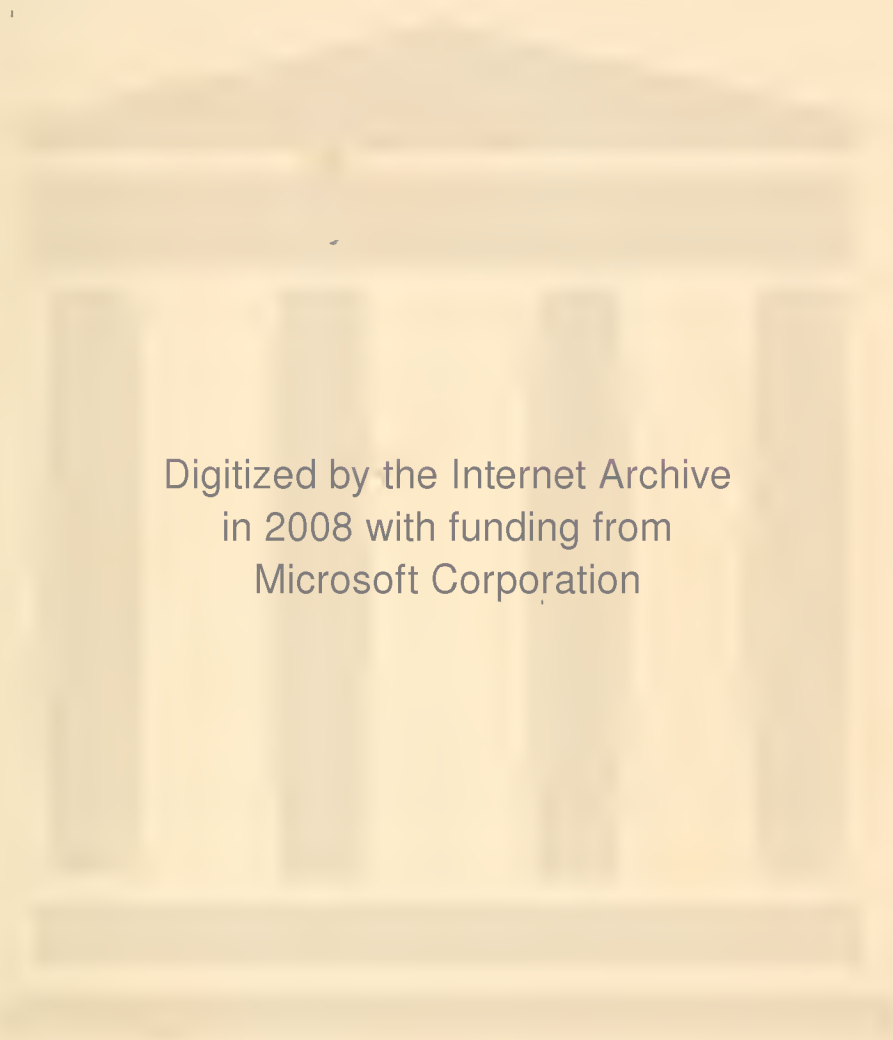
By ANNA MAC MANUS

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The Passionate Hearts

By ANNA MacMANUS
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AUTHOR OF "THE
FOUR WINDS OF
EIRINN."



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK

The Stories herein included appeared, for the most part, in *The Shan Van Vocht*, *The Catholic Fireside*, and *Donahoe's Magazine*. To the editors of the two latter, thanks are due for permission to republish.

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ETHNA CARBERY.

She who wrote these stories of our people loved them with a love that was deep and tender beyond what words of mine could convey. When she wrote of our people, when she spoke of our people—her people—her eyes went wet with fondness. Her faith in them was full, and great, and strong. Through their noble nature Mother Éire would, she knew, ere long rise triumphant. Hear her words:—

*“ We yet shall win a gold crown for your head,
Strong wine to make a royal feast—the white wine and the red
And in your oaken mether the yellow mead shall flow
What day you rise, in all men's eyes a Queen,
Mo Chraoibhín Cno !*

*‘ The silver speech our fathers knew shall once again be heard ;
The firelit story, crooning song, sweeter than lilt of bird ;
Your quicken tree shall break in flower, its ruddy fruit shall glow,
When your splendid Sun shall ride the skies again,
Mo Chraoibhín Cno ! ’*

To this glorious Day of the Gael Ethna Carbery looked forward eagerly, longingly, lovingly ; and of it she never ceased to sing.

*‘ Long is our hunger for your voice, the Hour is drawing near—
Oh, Dark Rose of our passion—call, and our hearts shall hear ! ’*

If any sacrifice on her part—even that of her bright and buoyant life itself—could have hastened the Hour, the sacrifice would, by her, have been accounted the crowning happiness of a life already happy beyond the ordinary.

Little dreamt she that ere the glory burst upon Erinn, God should have taken her to watch for it from His footstool. Yet, now that the grass is green above her grave in Donegal, the friends who knew her—who knew her unending work for our land, and who knew the passionate love of country that consumed her—can stand by that little mound and say from their hearts: There lies one who gave her young life to Ireland.

SEUMAS MACMANUS.

DONEGAL, APRIL, 1903.

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**The Passionate Hearts of
Inisgloir.**

The Passionate Hearts of Inisgloir.

WHEN John Gilchrist resolved to spend his summer holidays upon Inisgloir in quest of Gaelic folk-songs, his friend, Finian Lynch, heard of the project with hearty approval.

“Go by all means,” he wrote, “and I warrant you’ll find no more charming *seanachie* than Brigid Ní Bhriain. She has all the old *ranns* and stories of the place off by heart; and tells them very sweetly, too. Besides, she is very beautiful. But you are not to fall in love with her, mind, or try to make her fall in love with you, for she is bespoke already, and Peadar Ban would make short work of you if it came to blows. His handshake, when you meet him, will convince you of that.”

So Gilchrist landed one July afternoon from the cur-rach that had conveyed him across the mile of rocky sea, where the steamer dare not venture. He clambered up the bare terraces of limestone to the house of Dara Ua Brian—the father of Brigid—with whom he was to take up his abode during his stay on the island. The cottage stood on a high green plateau that seemed strangely out of keeping with its dull surroundings, for Inisgloir was—save for a few of these isolated fertile spots—a long, wide stretch of grey storm-swept level stone, intersected here and there with deep natural clefts, in which the delicate maiden-hair and the rock-violet grew fearlessly. Gilchrist had to venture over many of these chasms on his way up from the beach, and it was with a sign of satis-

that he dropped his heavy valise on Dara's threshold, and straightened himself to wipe his damp brow.

"God save all here," he said in Gaelic, leaning one hand on the lintel and peering into the dark interior, darker to his eyes after the white blinding glare of the sun.

"God and Mary save you," came the response in a clear vibrant voice, as a girl stepped out from the shadows. Gilchrist mechanically pulled off his cap at sight of her, and for a moment felt too amazed to speak. But in the pleasurable thrill that flashed through his whole body he recognised her as the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. Standing there in the doorway, with the strong searching beams of day full upon her, and the gloom of the kitchen behind, she came upon his senses like a rainbow leaping between the sword of the sun and the dark army of storm-clouds in a battling sky. She was clad in the ordinary costume of the island, a scarlet homespun petticoat, and bodice of dark blue, while round her neck was folded a white kerchief, and on her feet were the native pampooties of cow-hide. This much he saw in that first glance, before his quick interest became rivetted on her face under its nimbus of glorious red hair. He stared boldly at it, noting its perfect loveliness, with all an artist's delight: the noble breadth above the brows; the rounded beauty of the firm chin; the creamy paleness of the cheeks, contrasting so vividly with the sweet red lips; the delicate nose, slightly aquiline, and the dark blue, almost purple eyes, which held a question as they met his own.

"I am John Gilchrist," he said simply, in answer to her look.

"Oh, Mac Giolla Chríost," she exclaimed pleasantly,

giving him his full name in the Gaelic, which means the Son of the Servant of Christ. "Is it you that is in it? Come in then, gentleman, and a hundred thousand welcomes."

Her exclamations brought Dara, and Sibeal, his wife, to the door, with outstretched hands and friendly greetings. Gilchrist gladly took a seat in the corner of the settle and the tin of foaming milk which Brigid made haste to offer.

"'Tis the fortunate man I am," he said, contentedly, turning his boyish smile from one to the other, "to meet such heartiness in a strange place. I was half afraid to come—indeed I was—lest I should be treated as a stranger, though my friend, Lynch, assured me that I would not be. It was all because you have the name of being very clannish and reserved on the mainland beyond."

"That may be," replied Dara thoughtfully, running his fingers in a puzzled fashion through his thick grizzled hair; "but have you ever heard the name they do be putting on us in the other islands—the Passionate Hearts? That does not sound cold and reserved, now does it, Mac Giolla Chriost?"

Gilchrist leaned forward eagerly. "The Passionate Hearts! What a delightful idea. What does it mean? Does it mean that you are very fierce, and dangerous, and to be avoided?"

Dara smiled and shook his head; but Brigid stopped in her work of piling fresh turf on the fire to answer.

"Ah, no, gentleman"—her voice was full of a sweet gravity—"not now. It may have been so in the far-off times; but now we live in peace with all."

"The Passionate Hearts," Gilchrist repeated the name musingly, when Sibeal had moved out of ear-shot, and

Dara had gone to bring water from the well. "The Passionate Hearts. It may mean that if you are no longer dangerous in war you may be dangerous in peace."

Brigid paused. "How might that be, Mac Giolla Chriost?"

"Why in friendship—in love, for instance."

She lifted her dreamy eyes and gazed at him doubtfully. There was no sign of amusement on his countenance, and she believed he spoke in all seriousness. She knit her brows perplexed.

"I do not know." She spoke shyly, as if ashamed of her own ignorance. "I never heard that meaning given. Yet it may be so?" and a sudden deep blush crept up from her neck to the golden glory of her hair.

Gilchrist soon made himself quite at home on the island. He became free of every house from end to end of it. Sometimes he might be found seated beside an old woman at her knitting, tossing the ball of wool idly from one hand to another, while she crooned for him the peasant ballads he loved; or perhaps it would be by a child's cradle, taking down from the mother's lips as she rocked, the sweet hushful lullaby with its swaying refrain. At Eamon's Corner, when the fisher-folk foregathered in the evenings, he heard tale after tale of the marvellous part of Eri, of giants, of wild witch-women, of the sea-people who dwell beneath the blue waves, and of the *sidhe*—the fairies—hidden away in *lis* or in the heart of the lonely green hills. He heard, too, songs of battle, of love, of hate, songs which saddened or thrilled him as the theme changed with the mood of the singer, until his blood surged hotly, and he felt that those singing voices were so many cruel instruments tearing away the shrouding veil of his desires. From Dara, out fishing in his currach, he learnt the names and habits of the fish

darting like swift streaks of silver in the transparent depths. He would sit for hours watching him angle for the timid rock-fish, which is so delicate in flavour, and whose wonderfully speckled body has the blue-green sheen of a spear. He joined, too, in the pursuit of the sun-fish—*liabhan greine*, the natives call it—and when the elusive bright body disappeared into a whirl of sheltering foam, he invariably breathed a sigh of relief, for he hated physical pain, and loathed to see the tortured fish dragging behind the currach. Only for the thought of those cruel hooks he would have taken more pleasure in the fishermen, they were so calm and serious, and he could dream to his heart's content swayed in the brown boat on a softly wrinkling sea. He did not relish so much his experience as a cragsman, when he followed Peadar Ban at night down the beetling cliffs to the ledges where the puffin and gannet, and scarlet-beaked chough, lay in slumber, and while the islander tied the legs of the sleeping birds, his own brain grew dizzy in the starlight dark, so that he would have fallen but for Peadar Ban's strong arm, which went round him in answer to his cry, and dragged him to safety. Thereafter he preferred to study ornithology from a less perilous point of view.

With the island-women specially he quickly became a favourite. What mother's heart would not warm to him when he stooped so gently to kiss the child in her arms, praising its infant beauty, and whispering "God bless it," to keep the evil spirits afar. He knew by instinct the direct way to a woman's good graces. Young as he was he had had experience, and the knowledge gained in the world he carried with him to the quiet island. In the world that audacious masterful air, with its unexpected phases of tenderness—which he could no more

help than he could help breathing—was his most potent weapon with all the different women he wished to impress. The elder women forgave it as the affectation of a spoilt boy, and indulgently burned their motherly incense at the shrine of his youthful vanity. To the young girls his talk and manners carried the conviction that he had gone through much ; they had a vague idea, from his occasional penitent poses, that his wild days had been wild days indeed, and because of this, even in their flip-pant moods, they accorded a respectful attention to his opinions. Some women look with a certain terrified interest at a brand snatched from the burning. And Gilchrist was a very attractive brand. As a conversationalist, a story-teller, a debater, he was unsurpassed. Then his eyes would flash—those indolent dark eyes—and his whole slight frame quiver with the feeling that failed to express itself in his most eloquent sentences. When he lounged by some homely hearthside, narrating tales of past heroism, and mournfully bewailing the lack of heroes in the less spiritually-inclined to-day, he generally left his listeners under the impression, skilfully conveyed, that at least one man had inherited the bygone intellect and bravery and grandeur of character, although, so far, those gifts of the gods had not been stirred to the surface by opportunity.

These were his best moments. At other times he was a different being. He honestly meant to be true to the better part. Now and again he felt exalted and noble enough to die for a great cause ; but in the revulsion he might as readily betray it. The forces of good and evil, which in some souls fight half-heartedly, in his waged battle all day long and with all their power. Often he would give way to an impulse of passionate praying, and rise from his knees to seek his boon companions, in whose

excesses he would be the most boisterous and the most daring. Yet, withal, even those who knew him best, and realised his failings, bestowed upon him their pity rather than their blame.

To Brighid Ni Bhriain the coming of Gilchirst to Inis-gloir was as the advent of a light into a black desolation. Life, the gray quiet life she had endured without deeming it endurance, was now a realm of radiance, full of warm colour, of sweet sounds, of unutterable joyousness. She had not hitherto imagined that the hard work-a-day earth could so swiftly become a kingdom of enchantment, and solely because of one passing guest. All thought of Peadar Ban and his faithful love slipped away into the background of her memory. She felt like a dream moving through a dream, in which the thin sallow face of the newcomer was ever before her, and the echoing halls of her fancy were filled with the music of his voice. Her sympathies grew to quiver under his moods, so that she became dull or gay as he was either of these. When she sang him the ballads he had come in quest of, she knew it was her soul going forth to meet his on every wave of the sad exquisite music. The idea never entered her mind that he had set the snare of his experience to draw her heart out of her—to bruise or break. Even had she known that this was so, she would have loved him just the same, for her nature was such that its surrender to its first strong passion must necessarily be complete. She could not understand half measures in a case of life and death, and the love of Gilchrist meant the life or death of her happiness. One old song, *Oganaigh an Chuil Cheangailte* (Ringleted Youth of My Love), which was among his favourites, and which she never tired of singing, had a verse that seemed to her the personification of her own fancies concerning him. In the Gaelic it is many

times more melodious and more passionate than in this cold speech of the Sassanach :—

“ I thought, O my love, you were so—
As the moon is, or sun on a fountain,
And I thought after that you were snow,
The cold snow on top of a mountain ;
And I thought after that you were more
Like God’s lamp shining to find me,
Or the bright Star of Knowledge before
And the Star of Knowledge behind me.”

The discovery that Brigid had shed her love like soft rose petals about him caused Gilchrist little surprise. Sometimes, it is true, his conscience troubled him, as he remembered the girl he had left behind with his kiss upon her lips—the girl to whom he had given his word, and whose fortune was to make his future. But then, “ She will never know,” his worst self whispered. “ She is far away, and she is too wise to trouble her sensible head with doubts.”

And with this assurance he lulled the unruly accusing voice to rest.

The superb unconsciousness of Peadar Ban gave an impetus to his pursuit of Brigid. The young islander was proud to see his handsome girl so admired by the gentleman stranger, and it awakened no jealousy in him to find her time occupied by Gilchrist. It was no new thing for visitors to the island to seek her company on their wanderings over it ; she knew more of its history than any of the other young people, and had all the old *ranns* to give for the asking. Even in Sibeal’s motherly heart there was not a shade of suspicion, and Dara’s keen eyes were never keen, but soft and lovingly blind, when he looked upon his daughter.

Under their unseeing contentment Gilchrist wove the network of his snares around Brigid. He had many ways of torturing her, now that he had grown certain of her love. Once he told her how he had permitted a man who had been his enemy to do a wrong deed, when a word from him would have prevented the doing. He told the story graphically, not sparing himself, solely for the pleasure of seeing the shocked misery on her face. She had a strange faculty of experiencing sensations in colours on her mental vision, and as he confessed this fault, lying back carelessly in his chair, she saw his words dancing before her mind in a fiery line of scarlet—the colour of shame. Yet, when he had ended, and turned an interrogative glance on her, he met only the piteous loving appeal of her blue tear-wet eyes. She would not believe his own accusations of himself, and sorrowfully wrought upon him, until to soothe her he took her into his arms and denied the truth.

For days at a time she walked on the borderland of paradise—he was so tender, so devoted. “My Passionate Heart,” he called her, playfully taxing her with keeping the true meaning of the name a secret.

“Some day I shall waken to find out what it means, and what lies behind your gentle smile, my Brigid, and the discovery may be a calamitous one for me:” at which Brigid would shake her bright head gaily to reassure him. She was a radiant beam of happiness under the sweet words of his love.

Then his tactics would change, and for days he would treat her with icy formality, avoiding the wistful questioning of her eyes. To Brigid this was the flaming sword of the angel at the gate. Often he carried his cruelty so far as to ignore the dainties she had made specially because he had hinted a desire for them, and

tax both his teeth and his patience to the utmost over the tough bread that was the acme of Sibeal's culinary skill. Brigid would lie awake at night, weeping, praying, tossing from side to side in an agonised wonder as to what her fault had been, to rise unrested with swollen eyes and pallid cheeks in the dawn. When he saw her thus he felt gratified enough to alter his humour, and perhaps the first sign of relenting would be his deliberate soft touch upon her hand, as she moved the things to and fro upon the table. Then their eyes would meet, and on poor Brigid's side all would be forgiven.

One day of days—the most blissful perhaps of all that wonderful time—she went across with Gilchrist in Peadar Ban's currach to the south island. Gilchrist, in his usual fashion, fell a-dreaming to the rise and fall of the waves. He could watch Brigid where she sat erect and slender in the stern, and he thought of her tenderly as his glance followed the steady sweep of the oars. Peadar Ban was a fine rower for sure; see how carefully he could steer the boat in and out the snares of those twisting white foam wreaths. It was curious how indifferent Peadar was to Brigid's charms. He could never have loved her really or he would have been jealous many times of late. But then these islanders did not make any visible pretence of love in their matches; they rarely embraced one another; they seemed more engrossed in the practical consideration of providing for the future, and there was an unwritten law forbidding even the most trifling improvidence in the case of a young man seeking a wife; in fact no one of them would venture to ask a girl except he had his home ready for her coming. Engagements, such as were the custom of the outer world, were unknown amongst them. “‘The Passionate Hearts!’ Where does the passion come in,

"I wonder?" Gilchrist almost laughed aloud at this stage of his musings. Suddenly he caught sight of a name on the side of the currach, and leant over to read it. The spray beat up against it, so that he spelt out the letters with some difficulty.

"Brigid!" he exclaimed.

"'Brigid,' yes. That is the name she has for sure, Mac Giolla Chriost," said Peadar Ban, meeting his look.

"The dearest name in the world, it is then," said Gilchrist. "My favourite name."

Brigid blushed happily. "It was the name Peadar put on it long ago, oh! so long ago, Mac Giolla Chriost—when we were but children," she hastened to add, noting a shade akin to displeasure on the other's face.

Peadar turned round to her at the words, his strong countenance suffused with feeling.

"Children, or man and woman, it is always the same, Brigid. And you know it, pulse of my heart." And then he bent again to his oars.

Gilchrist stirred restlessly in a whirl of emotion. The peace of mind was gone. That unexpected remark of the young islander had been a revelation to him. It enraged him; it offended his refined susceptibilities; it fanned his vanity, and augmented his desire.

"I shall not let him win her," he stormed inwardly. "She is mine. She must be mine." Then he reflected that there might easily be worse situations than existence with Brigid on Inisgloir. What if he determined there and then to make her his wife, and begin a new life with her on the lonely little world of rocks. Would his wayward disposition settle down to the level of these serious fisher-folk—he never asked himself if it could rise to their heights—and while his children grew up around him, would the monotonous slow-passing hours bring him

no regrets? He pondered long over the question, until in the stress of answering it he forgot where he was, forgot sea, and lowering sky, and the heaving boat. A heavy rain-drop splashing on his cheek recalled him to actualities. He sat upright with a start and crushed the hateful question into the far recesses of his brain, much as a murderous hand might press a drowning head deeper into the clutch of engulfing billows.

That night he spent several hours writing a letter. It was to his fiancée, and he purposely made it a very amusing letter—full of details and island gossip, for she enjoyed trivialities. Her name given at the baptismal font was Brigid, but it had been refined into Bedelia during her school-days at a fashionable convent. Gilchrist made a jest of the absurd exchange, and called her Brigid notwithstanding her protests. He now smiled grimly to himself as he wrote the objectionable name.

“To-day I was out with a young fisherman for a row to another of the islands. He was the owner of our currach, and guess what he had called it? But you will never guess. ‘Brigid,’ no less. Yes, indeed, *your dear name*. I spoke my thoughts aloud, forgetting. ‘That is my favourite name,’ I said, ‘the name I love best in all the world.’ There was a girl in the currach with us—an islander—going across for something or other. She blushed at my involuntary speech. It appears her name is also Brigid, and she concluded I was paying her an indirect compliment. Poor silly creature! She did not understand that there was only *one* Brigid in the universe for me.”

He nodded his head knowingly to himself, and his smile deepened.

“That will both gratify and pique her”; he mused, “my lady has more than a fair share of the vanity and

curiosity of her sex. How curious she will be." Then he laughed outright, sealed the letter with a heavy blow of his hand, and blew a kiss on his fingers gaily in the direction of an imaginary Bedelia.

Although the mellow haze of autumn had come to veil the grave of the dead summer, John Gilchrist still lingered upon Inisgloir. Somehow he could not comfortably face the idea of his departure. He was reasonably happy—the present contented him, the future—well, why cross one's bridges until necessity decrees. So he dallied with the soft, warm wind of Brigid's adoration, and preened his vanity on the pedestal where she had elevated him. Occasionally he almost convinced himself that he was all she believed. If anything could have had the power to make him the ideal she fancied him, it was the fidelity of her blind devotion; but—and here the truth stung him—the daily endeavour to appear at his best was well-nigh more than he could bear. At times he did not know whether to curse her transparent tenderness, or his own hypocrisy.

It was when he was in this wavering frame of mind that one morning the mail brought him a letter which caused him to knit his brows and bite his moustache in a manner he had when troubled. Brigid saw this with beating heart, and, as he brooded over the closely-written sheets, she went about her household duties in a fever of anxiety. When at last he lifted his gaze to hers, as he rose to go out she knew intuitively that her fears were well founded. He was going away.

There was a quiet rock-sheltered cove, on the western side of the island, where Gilchrist often went to read and arrange the ballads he had collected. As he sat there now, staring blindly at a brassy sea, he heard Brigid's

light step bounding from boulder to boulder. He stood up as she came near and took her into his arms.

"You have hurried, my share of the world," he said, striking her flushed cheeks tenderly.

"There is always hurry on me, Mac Giolla Chriost, when you are needing me."

"And I need you now Brigid, a *mhuirnin* (my darling), for I have had unwelcome news."

"I know it, Mac Giolla Chriost. You are going away."

She tightened the clasp of her arms about him, and threw back her ruddy head so that she could look into his eyes.

"You are going away, Mac Giolla Chriost—that is the news you have for me. I know it: I have felt it coming: I have seen its evil shadow in my dreams. You are going back to your own world, and you will kiss me now and promise to return. But will you return, Mac Giolla Chriost? Answer me that—answer me."

She spoke in a quiet repressed way that startled him. He had bargained for tears and recriminations; but not for this subdued vehemence. He replied soothingly:

"I shall come back, girl of my heart; never doubt but I shall come back, and maybe sooner than you think. I do not want to go; but my work at home is being left undone while I am here, and the fascination of your tales and songs can hardly make an excuse for me. And you would not have me termed an idler, now would you, Brigid, my dear?"

He did not tell her that the letter was from the other woman—and that the orders for his return were peremptory; couched in the tone of one who already anticipated a wife's privileges. In that instant his heart fluctuated in a choice between the gold of Bedelia's coffers, and the

living gold of Brigid's wind-blown hair. He sighed, even as his heart set the two in the balance, remembering how unequal the comparison was, and that his bonds were too securely wound about him by his own act for a loophole of escape. Brigid watched him with the hungry intentness of one who sees a hope trembling on unfolding wings.

"Now would you, Brigid," he repeated.

She unloosed her clasp then, and lifted his hands to her bosom, crushing them against her warm young body in a strong, fierce pressure.

"There," she said, "it is my heart you feel, Mac Giolla Chriost, and it is yours, all yours, yours and none other's. If you do not come back it will break, it will consume of its own fire—it will be drowned in a sea of sorrow. But you will come back. Swear it: swear it before Christ and Mary and our Blessed Enda—swear that you will not leave my heart to break or burn or drown."

"My poor, sweet, frightened love," he cried, drawing her close until her pale cheek touched his own. Have no fear. I swear it. I shall come back. You will find me coming, perhaps, when you are not watching or thinking of me at all."

He smiled into her troubled eyes, and at the smile her fortitude gave way. A shudder stirred her from head to foot; she clung to him wildly, sobbing, lamenting. He said no word further, but waited until the storm of her grief ceased as abruptly as it had begun.

"When will you be going, Mac Giolla Chriost?" she asked at length, striving for control, despite the trembling eloquence of her lips.

"This very day, when the steamer calls again," he answered; "give me the parting blessing now Brigid,

my dear, beautiful girl. Say it bravely, and remember that I shall return in a little while."

She said it bravely, as he bade her, although the repression in her voice told how hard the effort was.

"To the White Lamb I commit you, O treasure,
To Mary, who turns the wheel of the stars,
To Brigid, that her mantle may cover you
In the dark, in the light, in your comings and goings.
To Patrick, shepherd of the fold,
And to Colum, the Dove of Christ's house,
I commit you with my prayers, my love, and my tears."

Then Gilchrist, with one last kiss, turned and left her.

.

It was a chance word that, shortly after Gilchrist's departure, aroused the serpent of jealousy in Peadar Ban. The men were grouped at Eamon's Corner in the September dusk for their accustomed gossip; the glow of their pipes made small points of light in the gloom; their voluble Gaelic speech flowed in a stream of friendly argument over this and that. Only Barty Dall, Blind Barty, the fiddler, sat silent, contrary to his usual wont.

"Now, why is there no talk from you, Barty?" queried Ulic Mór, a big brown cattle-dealer from the South Island. "What are you thinking of?"

"It is of a woman I am thinking," replied the blind man.

"Like enough!" Their deep laughter rang out suddenly, but there was no answering smile on Barty's old white face.

"Yes, of a woman," he repeated. "It is sad to hear the young go past with lagging footsteps and a sigh. Brighid Ni Bhriain went by to-day slowly, and I heard the dropping of her tears. There has been no gladness

in her heart since the strange gentleman, Mac Giolla Chriost, went from Inisgloir."

Every eye fastened in consternation upon Peadar Ban. He was gazing at the old man, petrified, his hands clenched, his teeth set. Then he turned his bewildered face to the watchers. They looked at him blankly, without a word.

"There is no truth in it," he said, stupidly. The remark was half an interrogation. No one answered.

"There is no truth in it," he continued, in a strangled voice, rising and clutching at his throat with one hand. "No truth in it at all, God, He sees. He shook the other hand at the star-flecked sky in denial to God and man. What was this sudden disaster—did he dream, was he awake at all? The silence of his comrades gave him the feeling of being alone in space, cut adrift from love and hope and the warm clasp of friendship. Dazed and ashamed to the heart, he stood searching their dimly-seen faces for some sign that the ominous sentences had rung only in his imagination. Still the silence remained unbroken, save for the long-drawn wail of belated sea-birds faring homeward, and the ceaseless boom of the now darkening breakers against the cliffs. "Oh God!" he cried frantically and abruptly, "Oh God!" Then, throwing a farewell gesture round the staring circle, he hurriedly disappeared into the shadows.

He went straight to Brigid. When he left her the blight of a love thrust back upon itself lay over him, and his heart quivered—a tortured thing—in a furnace of pain.

Work. That was the panacea heaven had generously granted him for his misery. He sent his earnest gratitude up night and morning to the King of Glory for the blessing of a strong untiring body, which knew not fatigue.

The fishing prospered more than ever with him, and his little bit of land bore evidence of his unceasing industry. A whisper went round the island that Peadar Ban must surely be making ready for a wife. The name of Brighid Ni Bhriain was never mentioned now in connection with him—but what other girl could it be? That was the puzzle. He had sat as a suitor at no other man's hearth during the winter months, nor had he left the island to seek a stranger. The handsomest of all the young men of Inisgloir, and the best-gathered. Surely he did not mean to live and die a bachelor?

Meanwhile, the object of their speculations, toiling strenuously to lull torturing memories, was not blind to the change taking place in Brigid. The girl had grown subdued and listless; her blue eyes gleamed hollowly out of a face that had lost its lovely curves, and her lips had the piteous droop of stifled sighs. Curses, the stronger for being silent, wailed up in Peadar's heart against Gilchrist. "Can I endure to watch her suffer—I, who would give my life for her sake? What good is my strength and my courage since it cannot spare her this woe?" Question after question glided through his brain, leaving nothing behind save a baffling sense of impotence. He beat helplessly against the hemming walls of difficulty, to retreat again and again, dejected and dismayed.

At last a light dawned in the chaos of his mind. What if Gilchrist had no intention of returning at any time? What if he had merely given the promise to soothe Brigid at parting? She firmly believed he would return, and the longing was consuming her very existence. If he had forgotten her, or dwelt upon the recollection of his summer at Inisgloir as a pleasant interlude in a busy barrister's existence, would it not be possible to have the

intimation conveyed, some way or other, to the girl, that she might at least learn the truth, and after a time come to forget? Yet, how could the knowledge be imparted to her? Gilchrist had sent neither message nor sign since his departure, but the schoolmaster had his address in B'la 'Cliath, and Peadar could easily obtain it. But then, how was he, with his imperfect English, to write down all he had to say to Mac Giolla Chriost? He had never been taught to write in the Gaelic, which was his native speech, and in which his thoughts moved most freely. He could fancy the supercilious air of the other when unfolding and perusing the ill-spelt, ill-written appeal to his honour from his humble rival. No, no; that would never do; some other way must be found.

When the daring thought sprang into being, he shook his head in horrified dissent. Oh, for sure it would not be possible! What! go, go all the way to B'la 'Cliath and ask Mac Giolla Chriost to come again to Inisgloir and bring back the happy shine to Brigid's eyes, or, if that could not be, to confess that he had never cared for her, that he had merely amused himself, as any young man of the world might, with a pretty girl. If he, Peadar Ban, dared take such a liberty, how Mac Giolla Chriost would smile and shrug his shoulders at a peasant's ignorance of a gentleman's feelings. It would be terrible to have those disdainful eyes moving slowly over one from head to foot. Ah no, that way would not be wise—it would do more harm than good, maybe—and yet, and yet—

What other way was there but this—this desperate and awkward one? And Brigid would certainly wither away unless her starved heart was satisfied. Perhaps if Mac Giolla Chriost heard how thin and white she had become of late, with the blue-black shadows under her

tired eyes, he would be sorry. Yes, God and Mary might touch him with pity, so that he would do this merciful thing, if Peadar could only find the right words to use when he pleaded Brigid's cause and his own. Surely, he would not refuse to come, or if he did, and gave no satisfactory explanation, well, there might be some other alternative offered him less welcome than a few hours' journey, or the trifling labour of writing a letter to Brigid of Inisgloir.

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Gilchrist turned round lazily as the door of his study opened. His eyes first contracted at the sight of the stranger on his threshold, then widened in astonished recognition. He sprang to his feet with hand outstretched.

"For sure this is the great surprise, Peadar Ban." He spoke in Gaelic. "What has brought you to B'la 'Cliath? Have you been over to sell your cattle, and taken a fancy to see the city? Well, we must give you a good time now that you are here."

The islander ignored the welcoming hand. He closed the door behind him and placed his back against it.

"I will be for taking none of your welcome now, Mac Giolla Chriost," he said, "and maybe you will not be for offering it when you hear what I am come to say."

Gilchrist stared at him. "What is wrong with you, man?" he cried. "Come and sit down. Tell me all about Inisgloir, and Dara and Sibeal—and Brigid."

"It is to tell you about Brigid that I am here, gentleman?"

"Has anything happened her? Is she ill? *Is she dead?*" The questions came hurriedly.

Peadar Ban gazed down from his great height into the blanched face.

"No, she is not dead, but she will die, Mac Giolla

Christ, and her death will be at your door unless you spare her."

"I?"

"Yes, you." Then, man to man, Peadar told the other the cause of his coming. He found, thanks to God and Mary, whom he had invoked, the fitting words, and they rushed in a torrent from his over-charged heart.

After the first start of surprise his listener did not stir, but sat with downcast lids and flushed countenance. When the islander had ceased, he raised his head.

"Is this all you have to say?" he asked quietly.

"All, Mac Giolla Christ, except, maybe, one other thing."

Gilchrist rose and walked to a bookcase at the end of the room. He picked out a book at random, and stood turning over the leaves with fingers that trembled.

"I have only one answer to give you," he said, and had the grace not to lift his eyes. "I cannot and will not go. Your suggestion is preposterous. It is insulting. I never injured the girl. I admired her beauty, without doubt, and what harm is there in that? Most women are willing enough to be admired."

"Brigid was never that sort, gentleman, and you know it."

"She is a woman."

"Will you write to her, then, and say what you have just said to me?"

"No, I shall not write."

"Then I shall be telling you the other thing. If you do not come, or write, Mac Giolla Christ, it is killing you I will be."

On Gilchrist's lips dawned the ghost of a smile as he looked around the well-appointed, cheerful room, in which this tragical utterance seemed so out of place, and

then glanced at his visitor. But the glance assured him that the threat was no idle one. Peadar still stood against the door, his fair head leaned back, and the firm, handsome outline of his features thrown up like a bas-relief from the wine-dark polished wood. There was no weakness in that face. Gilchrist tossed the book away, and stood biting his moustache silently and viciously.

"It is true, Mac Giolla Christ," repeated Peadar, gravely. "I mean it."

He spread out his freckled, shapely hands.

"My God, do you know what you are saying?" cried Gilchrist, turning like an animal at bay. "You would kill me? What good would that do Brigid? And what good would my going to Inisgloir do her, in any case, since I am to be married within the month?"

"Married?" Peadar gasped the word, "married?"

"Yes, married. Go back and break the news to Brigid. She will forget me readily enough then, I warrant."

The blood rushed madly into Peadar's face, dyeing it from the tanned neck to the roots of his hair. "You will come and tell her with your own lips," he said, sternly. "She would not believe otherwise—not if all the world was your messenger."

"Have done with this nonsense," Gilchrist exclaimed angrily. "Am I to suffer your insolence in my own house?"

He approached the door to open it, but Peadar dropped his hand quickly to the knob.

"No, Mac Giolla Christ, you must come with me; or, as I have said, I will be killing you."

Anger, shame, helplessness, drew tears almost to Gilchrist's eyes. He stood before the young islander like a prisoner in the presence of a judge, seeing no avenue of

escape, but that one that was objectionable to every fibre of his pride. It meant humiliation, deep and lasting, and doubly painful in that a woman, who had esteemed and loved him, must know him at last for the man he really was.

"It is simply ridiculous," he burst forth again vehemently, "this melodrama. In a story it might be all right, but in real life, and with these surroundings, it is laughable." The jarring nervousness of his merriment brought a heavy frown to Peadar's brow.

"You forget, Mac Giolla Chriost, the reason of my coming here; not to amuse myself, or you, but for Brigid's sake."

"For Brigid's sake." Suddenly across Gilchrist's memory flashed the picture of the girl as he had first beheld her that summer afternoon. The purple eyes were then unclouded, grief had not carved furrows on the round young cheeks. Poor, beautiful Brigid. She had loved him well, and he? God help him. What was this pain, as of a knife sheathing in his heart? Had she been able to wound him after all?—else why should he dread the scorn that would reward the story he must tell her—although he had blindly imagined that his wary wings had kept safely beyond the reach of the flame. He had cared for her—he could not deny it—and out of pity—nay, was not pity akin to love?—he would go and see her idol of him shattered at his feet. He was not afraid of those brawny arms of Peadar Ban—even were they around his throat—there was something worse than such a death; it was to see love and trust killed in another's soul. The shudder and chill that ran through him at the thought were an actual agony. It was his better self in the ascendant once more. That instant he made up his mind to go through the ordeal without flinching.

"When did you intend returning?" he inquired in a low voice, covering his face with one hand wearily.

"By the night train," answered Peadar. "It is six o'clock the steamer will be leaving: at the turn of the tide."

"Then we have little time to spare," replied Gilchrist. He went into his bedroom and came out again, bearing a small travelling bag.

"I want to say," he began abruptly, "that I am not taking this step through fear of your threats. I am going for—well, call it justice's sake, and because—because—Oh, man, I know now why you are called the Passionate Hearts! It is a true name. You are deadly—every one of you—for all your calm and kindly ways. Brigid, too—she will never forgive me; I feel it. It is she I fear—not you. I have gone through worse than death since you entered this room, through shame, and regret, and bitter humiliation. And now I go to greater abasement—perhaps, God knows—to the end of all things. The Passionate Hearts! Oh why, in my foolishness, did I play with leaping fire?

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When Brigid saw him entering the doorway once again, she rose from her chair, and stood grasping it tightly, for her limbs had grown weak, and were like to fail her. Sibeal's shrill volley of welcome rang in her ears without meaning, and she could not comprehend the greetings uttered in her father's deep accents. Oh, something wonderful had occurred, something that made her heart bound and grow glad as in the old days. What was it? Who was speaking now? Surely that was a dear and long-desired voice? She was beginning to comprehend at last.

It was Gilchrist who was speaking. He had seated himself in the familiar settle-corner, and was lighting a cigar, just as she had seen him doing many and many a time before.

"Yes," he was saying. "I met Peadar Ban beyond there unexpectedly, and thought I would take advantage of the opportunity to see you all before I became tied down for life." He smiled significantly, took out his cigar, and scrutinised the lighted point.

"Tied down for life," echoed Sibeal. "Now, Mac Giolla Chriost, what may that mean?"

"It means that I am nearing my marriage day, and I came across to hear you put the good wish on me, O woman of the house!"

"Listen to that now!" Husband and wife laughed sympathetically, turning to each other. "It is a wife he is going to take."

"Yes, a wife, Sibeal, no less. It is an old story now. She is a rich girl and handsome, and I may tell you it is she who was the impatient woman because I spent so much of the summer away from her on Inisgloir. But I was so enchanted with your island, and its charming legends and songs, that I really think"—his attempt at facetiousness was a miserable failure—"I would have been here yet only for the letter she sent me that last day, ordering—yes, ordering—my return at once. It was her right, you see—and I obeyed, as I should"

"Well, Mac Giolla Chriost, that is what happens to most of us, and I put the good wish upon you from my heart," said Dara, almost crushing the young man's hand in his.

"And I put the good wish on you, too, gentleman," said motherly Sibeal, her pleasant rosy face beaming with interest at the news, "that the King of Glory may

shower blessings and prosperity on your life and hers, and make your path easy to heaven."

"Is there no good wish for me with you, Brigid?"

She opened her lips to speak, but no sound issued. Her eyes glittered, and on her cheeks two bright red spots burned feverishly.

"Ah, then, Brigid, am I to go away without the wish from you?"

All at once some vital force seemed to become galvanised into action in her rigid body. She took a step nearer him, glowing with life from head to foot, radiant, beautiful as he had never seen her even in her most beautiful moments.

"Yes, Mac Giolla Chriost," her voice vibrated through the kitchen, clear, strong, relentless, "I put the good wish on you—that the woman who will be your wife shall ever know you for the man you are."

As Gilchrist turned to go from her scornful eyes, and Peadar's stern aloofness, his stripped soul shivered. The time might come when the recollection of this night's virtue would be its own reward, but now, as he stepped down from the pillory of self-condemnation, the virtue of his action was the last thing he thought of. He only knew that the world was cold and lonely, and that he was like a solitary reed shaken too cruelly by the wind of his destiny.

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On a night in the early winter, some months after Brigid's marriage to Peadar Ban, a fierce gale arose—the fiercest that had been known in the island for many years. All day the sun had hung low, blood-red, and awesome, with wisps of clouds floating away from it like torn fires. It was an unmistakeable sign of coming

danger, and the islanders, seeing it, one and all crossed themselves piously, "May God put his girdle of safety round all wanderers on the ocean," they prayed softly.

The dark hours, full of wild sounds of sea and wind, passed over them without sleep. Accustomed as they were to violent storms, through which they lay undisturbed and dreamless, on this occasion some premonition of disaster kept them awake, except the very young, who knew not fear.

It was near the breaking of dawn when a shrill whistle sounded above the storm.

"A steamer! She has struck on Carrigdubh!" was the cry that went from mouth to mouth. Then every man made ready to do his part, if needful. They came together on the western shore, where the shrill appeal rang clearest, peering seaward into the blackness through the lashing spray.

"It is on Carrigdubh she is for sure," said one. "She must be the big steamer from Derry gone out of her course. There will be hundreds on board; and maybe drowning, with no one to help. Who will go? The risk is great, but——"

"I will go," said Peadar Ban. Other voices gave the same response, and speedily into the restless, mad whirl of foam the currachs were launched. The watching women on the beach made no lamentations as they saw them depart; they were the wives and daughters of fishermen, and knew full well what meant the summons of the sea.

Peadar moved off, straining every muscle against the shore-sweep of the blast. He was alone in his boat, for a huge wave had lifted it out of reach before his comrade could leap aboard. He could perceive nothing in the obscurity; but the insistent scream of the whistle rang

out on his left, and he headed towards the sound. After a time he heard what seemed the beating of the steamer's screw, as it swished uselessly through the water. He dared not go nearer; it would be certain death. His boat was tossed hither and thither like a worthless thing; the foam blinded him. He could only wait there, baffling death, until the dawn came.

It came at last, in pale streaks of grayness. He could see now a few yards on either side of him. A log went drifting by in the trough of a wave. Something else rose on the crest of the following one, was it, too, a log? He shipped his oars, put out his hand as it went by, and caught it. Another hand clutched his tightly.

"He is alive!" Peadar's heart gave a big leap as he drew the drowning body nearer. He reached over and slipped his disengaged arm under that of the other, carefully balancing the currach by thrusting his feet wide apart. He had almost dragged his burden over the side before he saw the face, half-veiled by its dripping hair. He bent closer, for an instant, in horrified recognition; then withdrew his arms with a cry.

"Mac Giolla Chríost!"

The other had grasped the side as Peadar loosed his grip, and clung there, swaying helplessly in the rush of hurrying waves. The white crests jerked him upward with the currach, beat the breath almost out of him, tore at those desperate fingers holding to life. Every second it seemed as if he must disappear into a great, unending gulf. Peadar watched him broodingly; his whole mind in a tumult of indecision. Here was his enemy, the man who had stolen Brigid's heart from him, who stood between them even yet. Let him drown. He could do no further harm then; he would be spindrift of the ocean, endlessly sliding from peace to turbulence, from turbu-

lence to peace, in the calm world of under-waters, or on the peaks of storm-whipped billows. Yes, let him drown.

The brine-scourged eyes opened and gazed at him entreatingly, then closed again tiredly.

"Where is your wife?" cried Peadar hoarsely, bending his mouth down to Gilchrist's ear. "Was she on board?"

"No, we go different ways." The remoteness in the husky whisper hinted at death.

The islander had dropped his hands again on the clinging hands. Would he obey his first revengeful impulse and deny life to this man who had wronged him? He would be a murderer then, yes, that was the word. How Brigid would shrink from him if she knew. She had loved Gilchrist—she still loved him, for her heart had never opened to the knocking of Peadar's devotion. If he brought Gilchrist to her safely would the sad, unfamiliar Brigid disappear, and the song return to her lips? Gilchrist had once done a good deed—a hard thing in the doing—for Brigid's sake. Could, or would he, too, overcome this temptation—for the same dear sake?

With great difficulty, straining his strength to the utmost, he drew the limp form into the boat. Gilchrist was almost unconscious by this time, and lay huddled up where Peadar had placed him. A thick rope, to which usually the *cloch chuadhái*—the anchor—was attached, was coiled in the bottom of the boat, one end fastened to the bow. Peadar now gave a twist of it round Gilchrist's waist, tying it as tightly as he could with his benumbed fingers.

"Should we be upset that will keep him afloat," he murmured, as he tried to make the position of the senseless man easier. One strong sweep of the right oar sent the prow of the currach shoreward; but, in the act of

turning completely round, an enormous, unbroken wave—a very wall of deadly water—struck her full on the side. She filled to the brim, and keeled over, while the mighty wave went on its way.

Brigid waited restlessly on the shore for the reappearance of her husband. The cliffs rose tall and gloomy behind her, each scarp darkly outlined against the lesser dark of the dawning. The salt spray drenched her, the fierce wind buffeted her, so that she could scarcely keep her footing on the slippery rocks of the little cove where she had taken her stand, away from the rest of the women. This cove was where Peadar usually landed, as it lay below their home, and she felt instinctively that here he would strive to put in on his return.

“Oh, sorrow of sorrows! What if he never returned! What if he went down to death not understanding—unknowning that her coldness and silence was but the anguish of an ever-present shame, because he had seen her pride trodden under the feet of the man who had found her but too credulous. It was shame that stilled her singing—it was shame that had built this barrier of reserve between them. Oh, why had she been so senseless a woman? Why had she not opened her heart to the faithful heart that had chosen her for its star?” The fragrance of Peadar’s love lingered about her there in the dark, with a sweetness that hurt her, until the tardy tears obscured her vision, and she pushed back the ruddy hair from her blinded eyes.

A large object, riding on a high incoming breaker, attracted her attention. She waded into the surf, up to her waist, to meet it. As it approached she saw it was an upturned currach.

“Mother of Mercy, grant it be not his,” she sobbed, struggling with the forceful surge. Something smaller

bobbed up and down in the wake of the currach ; something on which her eyes concentrated in dread. The breaker crashed in upon her, and threw her back breathless on the shore among the shingle.

She rose, dazed, and crawled over to where the currach lay, half in, half out of the water. She stumbled over something else hurled up among the little pools. With a cry she fell upon her knees. Who were these two locked in each other's arms? She bent lower, and turned their faces up to the light.

"Merciful God!" her misery rang above the shriek of storm and boom of billows, as she saw what the sea had swept to her feet—"Merciful God!"

Very gently, and trembling in every limb, she unwound Peadar's arms from Gilchrist. Both were senseless, and on Peadar's forehead was a jagged cut where some wreckage had struck him. Her hand groped inside his vest until she found a slight stir at his heart. "He has come back to me," she cried aloud, an indescribable flutter of joy tingling through every nerve.

There was a slight tug at her dress, and she twisted round to see Gilchrist's weak hand groping at the folds. He was gazing up at her with filmy, unseeing eyes. She drew her skirt away impatiently, oblivious of his necessity, heeding or thinking of naught save the passive figure of her husband.

Slowly and tenderly she strove to raise him until his fair head rested on her shoulder ; then, thanking heaven for her splendid strength, she drew his arms around her neck and shifted her position until his weight rested on her back. With teeth set, face gleaming sharp in her sore stress, she crept from her knees to her feet, holding to the slimy boulders. Cautiously and steadily, panting until her heart seemed like to burst in two, she made her

way up the rocky slope to her cabin, and laid her beloved burden on the bed.

And down on the shingly beach, towards which she cast not one backward glance, the other lay helpless, watching with fascinated eyes, growing dimmer every moment, for the Ninth Wave—the drowning wave—that would sweep him away into eternity.



The Men of the Music.

THE MEN OF THE MUSIC.

I HEARD it first one August morning, as I lay close to the thatch in the gable-room of the little country hotel where I had come to spend my fortnight's holidays. There was a sudden shock to my dreaming—my love's smiling face disappeared into soft shadows, and I wakened to a droning whirr of melody that further dazed my half-slumbering senses. For a moment I did not realize that the music was aught but imaginary; then, as I heard it growing louder and louder, I sprang out of bed to discover the cause. A thick curtain of ivy almost concealed the four-paned window, which moved inwards on a hinge and was open owing to the heat. Through this curtain I thrust my head and saw, coming down the only hilly street of the village, two old men—two stooped and slender old men—whose resemblance to each other astonished me. It was as exact a resemblance as if one of them was gazing into a mirror. They were clad in the ordinary homespun clothes of the peasant; each wore a cloth cap with ears drawn close on his grey head, and round each wrinkled neck was tied a blue-spotted cotton handkerchief. Their faces were thin but ruddy; their features aquiline; their eyes a bright blue-grey. As they marched in steady step together, they kept playing a sad, tender, crooning air, which I have since learned to call "*An Bunán Buidhe*"—"The Yellow Bittern." The old man nearest me played upon a *fideóg* or whistle, the other had his lips curved around the

mouthpiece of a flute—or, as it is called in the Gaelic, *feadán*. Their harmony was perfect as they trod lightly over the cobble-stones, their bent elbows almost touching, while the tune floated away in a thin wail on the morning mist. I leaned through the little window as far as was compatible with my safety, and watched them disappear round the bend of the street. Then I went back to my pillow to pass the time in wondering—until the household should be awake—what was the story of these two who had gone by with their strange music so early in the autumn dawning.

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“Ah then,” said my host, Niall Beag MacGinley, as we sat in each corner of the wide settle in the window that faced the street. “Ah then,” filling his after-breakfast pipe with great deliberation, “’tis the same question that has been often put to me; and what man has a better right to answer, or what man in all the Glen can give you the truth as I can, word for word? Yes, God He sees, word for word.”

Here he reached out for a lighted turf which he applied to his pipe, and puffed away in unctuous silence. Floundering through my amateurish Gaelic, I begged him to proceed.

“Ah yes, it is myself, Niall Beg MacGinley, can tell the tale. Often and often I have told it, gentleman, to others coming like yourself for the fishing to Loch na Soluis—for the music going by so early has wakened many in that gable-room. One time it has been: ‘Is that room of yours haunted, Niall?’ Or, ‘What was the music that disturbed me?’ Or again, ‘Cannot the village band choose a more fitting hour than dawn for their practising?’ Or, maybe another would ask, ‘I saw two

strange old men go by playing this morning, Niall—were they ghosts or what? ”

He paused to gaze for a moment into the fire, and his jovial face grew thoughtful.

“ Gentleman, it was the Men of the Music you saw—the Men of the Music.”

“ Who are they, and why are they called so? ” I queried.

“ That you will hear in good time,” he replied slowly, with all the dignity of the *seanachie*. “ It is a sad story, theirs, and a strange.”

I leaned back in my corner resignedly, seeing that my eagerness merely flattered him into further procrastination.

“ Pádraic and Brian O’Keeney are names they are having,” he announced at last, “ and they went by this morning to cut the little field of corn they have ripening by the Loch side. Do you see that little house up on the slope there ”—here he led me by the arm to the doorway—“ with its white walls and the neat fences around? That is the home where they were born, and where they lived together since the mother of them died. A good woman and kind was Mairgreath, may her bed be soft in heaven, always generous with the bite and the sup to the needy. It was at one birth the boys were born, and Manus was the proud father surely that day when he saw the two little heads on the pillow beside Mairgreath. They were never a day separate in their growing-up, nor had one a thought apart from the other. The handsome lads they were, too—handsomest in the parish—and first at every diversion, with their music, and their dancing, and their love-eyes at the colleens. Pádraic, it was the fiddle he played; and Brian—oh! where was his equal on the pipes? ”

He nodded solemnly at the fire, as he repeated the last sentence, half to himself.

“My mother, God be good to her, used often to say that she felt the fairies around her when Brian would be playing his pipes of a summer evening on the rath behind; and then she would grope for her beads in the big pocket she wore, so as to keep their spells away. She knew the Little People must be jealous because he had stolen their art; for I swear to you, gentleman, it was like no earthly music when Brian O’Keeney put his fingers on the keys, and his lips to the mouthpiece. Oh no, like no earthly music that ever was.

“They were young—scarce past twenty years—when the cruel fever carried off both Mairgreed and her man, within a week of each other. Mairgreed, who was the last to die, made the lads promise to stay together in the old home. ‘If one of ye marries,’ she said, ‘let him bring the woman here, and she will be a sister to the other; if both of ye do it, then there is room for all—many a small roof covers great happiness. It is my blessing I leave you, and my prayer that no woman may ever cast sorrow upon my sons.’

“Ah, my grief; it was the knowledge that was in the poor dying heart of her made her speak; for a woman came, and the bitter black sorrow indeed she cast upon them. She was a young colleen, and fair—well do I remember—with eyes as innocently blue as the Loch water under a sunshiny sky, and the hair of her like the harvest gold, and the lips of her red as rowan berries. Truly the lovely young lass she was; but the rash tongue she had, and the foolish mind, for all her beauty. Soon she had set the young men of the Glen against each other—with her kiss to this one, and her smile to that, and her kind word to the other, and her truth for none. Ah, no

indeed, her truth for none, as I learned to my cost, though," with a sly glance towards the dairy, where a short matronly figure moved hither and thither, while the thud, thud, of the churn-staff, as it lashed the milk, made a pleasant subdued noise—"The *bean-an-tighe* beyond was never a bit the wiser of that young folly of mine, nor need she ever be. Men will be men, and there is much the woman that is your wife had best be ignorant of."

"True man you are for that saying, Niall Beag." I nodded my head eagerly in approval. There was a twinkle in his eye as he resumed.

"Well, it was not long until the village began to see where the tricks of Eilis would make trouble. One time she would be walking with Brian through the boreens in the gloaming, and next she would be whispering with Pádraic across some stile, when she should have been hurrying home from milking the cows. The other lads seemed to have found out her mischievous ways for themselves before it was too late; but the brothers were too simple, and no one dared to warn them. Soon we noticed something between them. They did not come together as often as before, to the dance and the merry-making; nor did they go away together. Maybe, for all we guessed, each went his separate road to catch a last word or smile from the girl who was torturing both.

One evening—it was the middle of summer, for I remember the hedges were dotted with wild roses—I came upon the three, and bitter, bitter speech passed between them. Eilis sat a-top of the stile that was at the end of the meadow I was crossing as my nearest path home, and the brothers stood one on each side, black anger on their faces, and their mouths hot with the curses that were hotter still. It would have been an ill sight for their

mother to see, and I've often thought since that it was the kind God He was to have spared poor Mairgreed this. Their hands were uplifted to strike, while Eilis sat smiling, drawing the strings of her bonnet between her lips and taunting one and the other in turn. She grew suddenly white as the *ceanabhán* blossom when she twisted round and saw me standing behind her.

"I did not spare the treacherous foolish thing; for I had my own score to pay back to her. I was the lad she had given her kiss to, and her pledge, and it was over the head of Pádraic and Brian we had quarrelled. She had cried sore, and clung to me, saying I was the only one she wanted; but I did not heed. I cast her off, and the love I had in my heart for her died away as a fire of peat might die into grey ashes. When I saw her raising the winds of hate between poor Mairgreed's sons, all that was in my mind against her went out in flaming words.

"'Brian, friend of my heart,' I said, 'and Pádraic, *a dhílis*, is it for a light foolish woman you will be throwing the curses at one another? Few of them are worth an honest man's rage, and she least of all; for it is nothing but trouble she has been stirring up in the Glen since she came.' And I said much more, gentleman, which, for shame's sake, I will not be telling you, now that the past is past and the resentment long left me. Maybe it was too harsh my speech was, and she such a slender pretty young flower of a maid; but I did not weigh the words then, and they tumbled from my lips in a torrent. I only knew how cruel they were by the horror in her eyes.

"When I had finished she stepped down from the stile and stood before me. 'God forgive you, Niall MacGinley,' was all she said, and a stab ran through my heart that I thought hardened to her wiles, for her miserable eyes had told me the truth at last."

His voice broke, and I could see a moisture gather on his lowered lashes as he continued.

“But it was too late for any understanding between us, gentleman. I had wounded her to the core. She walked away slowly with head down bent, and the next morning she left the place for the home of some kinsfolk that dwelt in a distant town. I have never seen her since. Sometimes the old people, like myself, talk over the story, and the young smile at it in their untried wisdom, and now and then a tender-hearted one will drop a tear; but the years have brought little change to the lives of these two—making their music day after day—except the gray hairs, and the weariness, and the backward glances into the long-gone time that the old cherish most.

“There now, it is the tongue of me is running too fast, gentleman. As the life shortens the tongue lengthens—is a wise saying. Soon we all saw that matters were growing even worse between the boys, so one day I went to the little white house and begged that peace should be between them for their mother’s sake. They were silent at first, and angry belike; then Pádraic spoke what was in the heart of him, poor lad—’twas the sore heart, too. ‘I will live with him that is my brother and was my friend, because he is my mother’s son,’ he said, ‘but never again will the word cross my lips to him—no, never in this life. He can go his own way, I will go mine.’

“My sorrow! I knew it would make further mischief if I said more, so I only looked at Brian. His eyes were hard, and his mouth set. He glared at his brother for one moment, while I saw the muscles of his neck swell and his hands clench, but he did not speak. Instead, he opened the door quickly, and stepped out into the night.

“They gave up their sports and dancing, and by degrees their friendly ways of dropping in on this neigh-

bour and that. Pádraic would sit in a dark corner, as far as possible from the fire, playing on his fiddle so as to keep out of the talk. It was afterwards I discovered—through the curiosity of the children, who stole off to peep in at the window every evening—that when they were by themselves Pádraic took up the fiddle and Brian the pipes; and thus they put in the time between supper and bed.

“Well, God be thanked, the music kept them from worse, maybe, and now when they go to cut their corn by the Loch side, or cross beyond to the fields to plough or sow in the spring—’tis ever the same; the *feadán*, and the *fideóg*, give notice of their coming. For you see, gentleman, the fiddle and the pipes would be awkward to carry morning and evening, leaving aside that the moist air would be bad for both. So, ’tis the *fideóg* and the *feadán* they choose instead, for they could play them as well as the others. And now, that is their story for you, every word as true as Gospel; Christ and Mary look down on their spoilt sorrowful lives.”

I came back the next autumn to the same little gable-room, and the music of the *fideóg* and the *feadán*. The brothers were just as usual, my friend, Niall Beag, assured me, in answer to my eager inquiries; yet, strange to say, a change in their monotonous existence was impending, in the bringing about of which I myself was to play a part.

When I was in the place a few days an unexpected invitation reached me from a friend who had taken a fishing lodge in a distant quarter of the country. “I am in the heart of a glen,” he wrote, “and there’s sport such as you have never seen in your life before, in these waters. Only a group of cabins in the whole place, and my shanty. So you’ll get quiet, and homely fare. Do come.”

I went, and drove down that glen in the sunset, when every nook and corner of it was glorified in the magic light. The heather ran in flaming purple floods down the mountain sides, out of which huge boulders rose, moss-green and rugged; and the river, which was so full of promise, wandered like a thread of silver through the gold and russet and purple peacefulness. The corn fields, newly cut, together with other signs of pastoral life, charmed my practical eye; and I noticed, too, that all the women I passed on my way were knitting, or flowering—as the fine hand-embroidery on muslin and cambric is called. They returned kindly Gaelic greetings to my “*Dia dhuit*” (God save you) with pleasant smiles; and truly I deemed my friend and myself fortunate in our surroundings.

One afternoon I had wandered towards the farther end of the Glen, and, feeling thirsty and very tired under the hot sun, called at the open door of a neat cottage for the wayfarer’s bite and sup. Just inside the threshold an old woman sat spinning, who rose and brought me a foaming jug of milk, and a generous square of thickly-buttered oaten bread. As I ate and drank she interrogated me thoughtfully, noting my exhausted condition. Was it a long journey I had come? Had the fishing been good? Did I think that I would feel able to return that night? If not, she would make me a shake-down by the fire; and her nephew, with whom she lived, would gladly see after my comfort. She was a little thin old woman with a pretty red on her old cheeks, very alert in her movements. As I answered, and told the distance I had come, she made little crooning sounds of interest. I showed her my basket, heavy with fine trout, and begged her acceptance of a couple. “Ah, no, no,” she shook her head, “the gentleman ought to keep

what he had won by his hard day's tramping to show his friends at the lodge, or perhaps they wouldn't believe he had caught so many." Then we drifted into conversation about the country beyond the high hills that bulwarked the valley. Yes, she had once been beyond there when she was young; though now it seemed like a dream to remember that she had ever been anywhere in the world outside her own glen. She gave a strange start when I mentioned Loch na Soluis, and a shadow came over her eyes.

"I used to live there when I was a girl," said she.

I mentioned the name of a few of the villagers; amongst others, the Men of the Music.

"Ah, God forgive me," she wailed, putting up her hands to cover her face. "I knew them long ago."

At that a sudden light broke on me. "You are Eilis," I exclaimed involuntarily.

She dropped her hands on the instant, and the old face went pale as death.

"How do you know? Who told you this?" she gasped.

Already I had regretted my hasty and unwarrantable remark; but I had gone too far now to refuse the explanation she evidently desired. I fidgetted a moment awkwardly, while she sat expectant. "If you please, will you tell me, gentleman," she said, timidly.

So, as we sat there by the open door of her little cottage, with the twilight mists falling like a veil upon the heathery slope, and yellow corn-fields, and the river singing a little lullaby of its own to the dying day, I told her the after-tale of Pádraic and Brian O'Keeney. She crouched silent, with her apron over her head, rocking gently to and fro, as I spoke.

When the tale was ended she uncovered her face, and gazed at me earnestly, with tear-filled eyes.

“What can I do?” she whispered. “Can I do anything at all?”

Then I had an inspiration. “Come back and make peace between them,” I said. “You owe this reparation to their ruined lives.”

She beat her bosom in passionate self-accusation.

“Ah yes,” she murmured slowly, “we are old now, and the grave near. I will go.”

That night I accepted the hospitality of the nephew; and the next morning saw me set out accompanied by an old weeping woman, who all the way kept dabbing with a red cotton handkerchief at drenched eyes, that were hardly to be seen under the dark gathered border of her hood. In spite of her grief she was excited and pleased at the novelty of the journey, and the swift motion of the train inspired her with awe. I could hear her praying softly at intervals.

When I brought Eilis to Niall Beag MacGinley's, that worthy man looked as if a ghost had arisen. He recognised her, and it was a trembling hand he stretched out to clasp hers. I drew him aside and explained that after she had rested, he must take her up to the little white house on the hill. I had done my share—with God should be the rest.

Afterwards Niall Beag told me the details of the interview. My regret is that I cannot give them in the impressive Gaelic of his own words.

“They were sitting playing, one on each side of the *greasaugh*, when we came in,” said he, “and the crickets were chirruping very loud. But, for all that, it was a lonesome sight. Eilis stopped just inside the threshold, for I made her enter before me, and Brian was the first to see her.

“‘What little woman is this?’ he called out, and his

voice was loud and threatening. 'There is no place for a woman here.' At that she put back her hood—and oh! God in heaven, such a look in all their eyes.

" 'Eilis,' cried Brian.

" 'Éilis,' cried Pádraic.

" 'I have come to make peace,' said she, reaching out her hands suddenly and clutching a hand of each. 'To make peace where I made strife long ago.'

" Neither moved; they were too dazed; but I saw clearly the thought running through their minds—that it was for this woman, no longer young, no longer lovely, they had borne the weary burden of hate. They, like myself, had always dreamed of her as we had seen her last in her handsome girlhood, and the reality, though a shock, was the one thing necessary both to disillusion them and to extinguish their antagonism. I drew back into the shadows, leaving the three to themselves. Pádraic was the first to speak.

" 'Why did you do it, Eilis?' said he, softly.

" 'Why did you put this heart-break on us?' said Brian.

" 'Be kind, and make peace, and forgive me,' she begged. And across her bent head, with the old affection breaking through the crust of dislike, the brothers gazed remorsefully into each other's eyes."

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Several years elapsed before I again revisited Loch na Soluis, and then I brought with me my dear wife. I found many changes in the familiar place; but my host of former days, Niall Beag, was still alive, though rheumatic and very feeble. In answer to my inquiries concerning the Men of the Music, he shook his gray head sadly.

“They are under the sod in Kilcreevanty,” he said, “sleeping soundly together. It was on a Christmas Day they died, and, curiously, they had longed prayed that God might take them to Him on that day of days. They drew their last breath almost at the same moment; and were laid side by side in the one death-bed. There was never such a wake known before in the country; for people came in from far and near. On the morning of their burial it was very wild and stormy, with a cold rain blowing from the west. Yet, for all that, two lighted candles were carried in front of their coffins across to the church-yard beyond, and though the rain fell, and the wind blew, the candles were not quenched, nor did the flame flicker once. This was a sign to show that they were holy souls, and had died at peace with God. May He give them rest.”

And “May He give them rest,” I repeated fervently after him.



The Wee Gray Woman.

THE WEE GRAY WOMAN.

HIS cabin stood by the side of a burn into which the sally-trees drooped from either side, making a thick fringe of green that met overhead and cast dappled shadows on the clear water when the sun stood high and fierce in the heavens. Little ripples broke in white bubbles around the stones that made the crossing-places, and the speckled trout darted like tiny silver spears through their haunts below the overhanging banks.

It was a tranquil, lonely spot; eerie, too, in the autumn twilight, when the slow-creeping mists rose up from the bog for miles around, and many were the tales told of an evening, by the folk living on the high land, of lights that flashed all over the bog at the very moment that Jamie Boyson set his candle in his cottage window to guide the Wee Gray Woman up the rugged loaning to her seat in the chimney corner.

Once it happened that the wild young fellows of Glenwherry came in the dead of night to play a trick on Jamie. They stole over the stepping-stones of the burn and noiselessly reached the one-paned window, half hidden by thatch, in which the light gleamed. A red turf fire blazing on the hearth lit up the interior of the old man's kitchen; it shone on the battered ancient dresser, and on the store of carefully-kept delf that had been his mother's. For Jamie had the name of being cleanly and thrifty in his ways. The hearth was care-

fully swept, the flat stones at front and sides whitened by a practised hand, and no ragged streaks wandered over the edges on to the clay floor beyond. A three-legged stool stood in front of the fire, placed there for the convenience of the unearthly visitant who, Jamie said, came nightly to sit and rest herself by the *greesaugh* until the black cock should crow in the rafters above the settle-bed, invariably awaking him at the same moment that the Wee Gray Woman got warning to leave. That was why he could never get a right look at her, he lamented. Sometimes he opened his eyes in time to see the flutter of her gray cloak as she passed out of his door, and once he caught a gleam of red. It was a red hood she wore, not like anything that mortal ever saw before, but just as if a big scarlet tulip had been crushed down over her head with all the leaves sticking out round her face. And his blood always curdled when she gave a cry going over the threshold, as if she was being dragged away into some dreaded torment from which she had had a respite.

“It would break the heart in yer breast to hear it, just for all the worl’ like the whine of a dog when there’s death aroun’,” he would say.

But no one could get him to commit himself as to a theory about the comings and goings of the Wee Woman. Whether he fancied her a friendly denizen of fairyland, or a poor wandering ghost dreeing her purgatory for her own sake or the sake of some one loved and living, the inquisitive people of the bog-side could never learn, yet night after night the hearth was swept, and the stool placed that she might have her rest until dawn broke in a flame of gold and pale chilly green over the hill-tops.

So the ghostly story spread, as such stories will, through the country, finding by turns sympathiser and

sceptic alike, who yearned, though fear of the supernatural kept most of them away, for a peep through Jamie's window before the black cock gave the signal. But the young fellows from Glenwherry, daring and mischievous as they were, had made up their minds to solve the mystery, and nothing daunted, holding their breath steadily, they drew close to the little window, and out of the thick blackness of the last night-hour glared into the haunted kitchen.

The firelight flickered fitfully at first, so that their eyes, half blinded with the darkness, saw nothing save shadows; then, suddenly, a gleam shot from the heart of the dying turf, and showed a vision that drove them back from the window, saddened and ashamed.

It was only the old man asleep in his settle-bed, his thin, wrinkled profile outlined like a cameo against the background of dark wood, and the patient old hands, that were so gentle and capable, folded upon his breast, as when he had lain down to sleep.

After that the Wee Gray Woman might come and go, without dread of being watched for, or disturbed, and among the Glenwherry lads Jamie found a set of stalwart partisans, whose judgment in his favour dare not be gainsaid.

He was not altogether devoid of occupation and amusement in his lonely existence. The little one-roomed cabin was tidy as a woman might have kept it. And though he harboured neither cat nor dog, during one winter at least—the severest winter known for many years in that locality—he had a pet, and the pet was a cricket. Imported from a neighbouring fireside, he had trained it with the utmost patience and skill until the diminutive dusty-looking object learned to jump out from behind the big pot in the chimney-corner at his

call. The story of his having accomplished such a marvel scarcely gained credence; it was not to be compared to that of his ghostly guest; but the country children cherished it and repeated it in wide-eyed wonder, when they gathered round their elders' knees before the unwelcome bedtime; while the more superstitious asserted that it was the Wee Gray Woman come to bide with Jamie Boyson by day in another guise. It certainly looked uncanny enough, hop-hopping over the floor, chirruping in a shrill, faint treble to his deeper intonation, and, when he lifted it, creeping into the shelter of his hand, as a home bird might that has known and loved and trusted in the kind guardianship.

But once upon a time Jamie Boyson had need of neither ghost nor cricket for company. That was in the days of his early manhood, when, stalwart, supple, and strong, he led the boys of Crebilly to victory on many a hard-fought field of a Sunday, proving himself a champion to be proud of, in throwing the shoulder-stone, and wielding the *camán* against the athletic Glenwherry lads, with big Dan O'Hara at their head. Then, where was his equal to be found at dance or christening? Why, half the girls in the country were in love with him, and hopelessly, too, as they learned to admit to their own sad hearts, that fluttered so uncomfortably under the Sunday 'kerchiefs when he passed, his black head erect, and his shoulders squared like a militia major's, without a look at one of them, up the chapel aisle to his seat next his mother in the old family pew.

The family pew held something else besides his mother; something the very sight of which was enough to bring the red blood in a rush to the roots of his curly dark hair, and make his heart almost leap out of his breast for gladness; something that was small, and fair,

and blue-eyed, half-hidden behind his mother's ample form, and scarcely lifting her white lids from the beads she was passing through her fingers.

She was no stranger to him; he had many opportunities of watching her pale sweetness by his own fireside at night, without embarrassing her with that burning gaze of his under the disapproving eyes of all the congregation; but he was wont to say to himself, as a sort of justification, that little Rosie at her prayers taught him more about heaven and holiness than the priest could do with all his preaching.

His brother Hugh used to joke him often and often about his fancy for the little orphan girl whom his mother had saved from the poorhouse, and Jamie's brow would glow with the angry red that warned Hugh's tongue to stop, and the laughter to die out of his merry brown face. There were only the two of them left to his mother, and one took little Rosie into his life as a sister, while to the other she, whom the country lads in general had called "a poor, pale wisp o' a thing," became his all, his world, his gateway of Paradise. How the love for her grew up in his heart was a mystery to him. Perhaps it took root when as a little child—the evening she came home to them—she laid her flaxen head on the bashful lad's broad shoulder and would not be parted from him until sleep stole on her unawares and released the tiny hands from their grasp on his strong ones. Or perhaps it came later as he learned to watch delightedly her deft, gentle household ways, and heard her crooning to herself over her flowering, in the rare leisure moments the active, bustling mother allowed.

There was an old song he was very fond of singing about "Lord Edward"—an old song she loved to listen to—and he was always sure of a grateful glance from the

shy eyes, when of a winter's night he favoured the little circle around the hearth of Lisnahilt with the stanzas set to an air that was very popular in the district:—

“ The day that traitors sold him an' enemies bought him,
The day that the red gold and red blood was paid ;
Then the green turned pale and trembled like the dead
leaves in autumn,
An' the heart an' hope of Ireland in the cold grave was
laid.

“ The day I saw you first, with the sunshine fallin' round
ye,
My heart fairly opened with the grandeur of the view ;
For ten thousand Irish boys that day did surround ye,
An' I swore to stand by them till death, an' fight for
you.

“ Ye wor the bravest gentleman an' the best that ever
stood,
An' yer eyelids never trembled for danger nor for
dread,
An' nobleness was flowin' in each stream of your blood—
My blessin' on ye day and night, an' Glory be your
bed.

“ My black and bitter curse on the head an' heart an'
hand
That plotted, wished, an' worked tne fall of this Irish
hero bold,
God's curse upon the Irishman that sould his native land,
And hell consume to dust the hand that held the
traitor's gold.”

Sometimes tired with the day's hard work, she would rest her head against the wall with a low sigh of weariness.

ness. She must often be tired, he thought; those little feet had run about so nimbly since early morning, and the little red hands had washed and baked, without a moment's pause; but, please God, that would be all ended soon, when his wife should reign over a home of her own, and he had taken her into the shelter of his strong arms for evermore.

Yet no word of this crossed his lips, though the desire that filled his heart beat like a strong ceaseless wave within his breast, giving him an almost unbearable pain, and he never dreamt but that she knew. In the very effort to control himself, his voice was, curiously, harsh when he spoke to her; and while the poor child trembled at the rude accents, her faltering reply aroused in the big, tender-hearted fellow a wild feeling that was half exquisite pity, and half hate. Ah! if he had only spoken then, the grim tragedy of his life might have been spared him.

One bleak night in autumn a sound outside drew him to the door, and opening it, he stood listening.

"John Conan's calves are in the clover-field," he said; "go and put them out."

Rose lifted her timid blue eyes to him questioningly.

"Do you hear me?" he asked.

"But I'm afraid," she murmured; "it's so dark, an'——"

He pointed his finger to the open door and the black stormy night outside.

"Go," he repeated fiercely, turning to his chair, and lifting his pipe off the shelf, and the girl passed into the darkness without another word.

What madness was on him that he had spoken to the little girl, and sent her on such an errand? he asked himself when she had gone. He had been conscious of a

strange, sore sensation all day, since at Crebilly Fair, that forenoon, Tom M'Mullan had proposed a match between her and his son Jack, one of the wildest young scamps in the whole countryside, and the unreasoning jealousy grew and grew until he had wreaked his pain in vengeance on his poor Rosie's unoffending head.

"Oh! amn't I the queer, ungrateful fool," he muttered, "to trate the wee lass this way."

An hour passed, he waiting every moment to hear her footfall on the threshold, and his mother speculating comfortably that she had gone in for a gossip to John Conan's. At last he could bear his regret and the suspense no longer, and went out to seek her.

It was only a step or two to the clover-field, and reaching the low stone wall he called to her eagerly in the darkness. The startled calves, still enjoying their forbidden banquet, lowed back in answer.

He vaulted the gate, every step of the way familiar to him by night as by noon, and called anxiously and long. Then he remembered his mother's surmise, and turned across the field to Conan's.

There was no little Rosie sitting with the laughing girls grouped together in the corner, over a quilting frame, and in response to his husky demand a couple of Conan's young sons volunteered to accompany him on his search—Hugh, his brother, being away for the night in a market town many miles off.

He walked on, quickly, in the direction of the bog, guided only by his intimate knowledge of the treacherous path that wound like a serpent across the marshy wind-swept surface. He heard the small waves beat against each other with a faint sad sound, while overhead not one solitary star glimmered, to light his heart with hopefulness. Through the terrible night, and into the dawn,

his frantic search continued, calling her name in a hoarse agony that wrung the souls of those who heard him.

“Rosie, Rosie, my little girl, it’s Jamie’s callin.’ Ah! come, can’t ye, an’ don’t be hidin’ there. Don’t ye hear me darlin’, it’s Jamie, an’ the supper’s waitin’ on us. Let Conan’s calves go—they’re always a trouble to somebody, but *you* come home. Here, take my han’”—stretching out his arms into the empty shadows—“take it, love, an’ don’t be afeard, nothin’ can touch ye, pulse o’ my heart, when I’m beside ye, Rosie! Rosie!”

And so on through the dreary hours, over the wild bogland, his voice rang in pitiful entreaty, until jagged streaks of golden red flamed like trailing banners in the East, and the birds, wide-awake, took up in a chorus, clear-tongued and grateful, the morning song; but alas! for him, whose song-bird had flown afar, and for whom the dawn henceforth should hold no radiance, nor the rose-flushed mellow evening any passion.

Yet his frantic cry broke in upon the happy choir, and the blackbird and thrush, from hedge and beechen-tree, watched him staggering home in the sunshine, murmuring through lips that scarcely knew the words they uttered—“Rosie, Rosie, girl dear, come home.”

Some hours later a turf-cutter, crossing the burn to his work, caught a gleam of something bright under the cold running water. It was little Rosie’s fair head lying against the stones in the shade of the drooping sally-trees, whither through the darkness, blinded by her sorrow, she had wandered to her death.

Jamie Boyson aged suddenly after that. When the friends of his boyhood had grown into sturdy, middle-aged men, strong and hearty, he was already old, with a gloom upon him that no smile was ever known to lighten. In time, when his mother died, and Hugh had married,

he grew unable to bear the sound of children's chatter through the rooms where he had once hoped to see his own little ones at play, and came to live his life alone in the cabin by the burnside, from whence he could watch the very spot where poor Rosie's gentle head had lain under the clear cold ripples.

So the country folk, noting his absent dim blue eyes, and wandering talk about the Wee Gray Woman, grew to believe that it was little Rosie's ghost come to bear him company until the call should sound for him, and his broken and desolate heart should find peace.

That was many, many years ago ; and, perhaps, they have met long since in heaven, where Jamie Boyson, young, and straight, and strong again, with all the bitterness gone from his heart, has taken little Rosie in his arms and told her the truth at last.



The Singing Women of Tory.

THE SINGING WOMEN OF TORY.

TORY lies out in the blue Atlantic where the tides are strong and the currachs go in danger. A long narrow island it is—on the ocean-side presenting a rock wall which rises out of the waves like a line of towers, black and forbidding. On the land side the fertile patches slope to a stony beach, and here the fishermen's boats are gathered high up from the reach of the waters. Round the ruins of St. Colum's Tower, with its broken cross, cluster the cabins that make the village—poor storm-beaten homes wherein melancholy finds a steadier abiding place than mirth. Over on the mainland, separated from Tory by a stretch of turbulent billows, Horn Head looms black above the dark surges, while further round the coast the shining sand-hills of Dunfanaghy and the strands of Falcarragh make a clear belt of whiteness like a strip of neutral ground between land and sea. On a day of mist, which is frequent, the pleasant green hills beyond there are hidden with the stately peak of Errigal, and then the dreary desolation of sky and ocean lays its clutch upon the hearts of those who dwell on that lonely island. Winter cuts them adrift from the rest of the world, and the slow days pass in a gloomy monotony until the gray heaven grows dappled again with the coming of spring.

A man's voice is never heard in song in Tory. It is only the women who sing there, by the firesides when the storms are abroad, or in the summer gloamings when the

sea-haze creeps round crag and uplands, and the moon sails placidly through her realm of stars. Then one may hear a sweet faint chorus float on the wind as the *cailíns* go arm in arm crooning the old Gaelic airs with their haunting words that tell of love and hate and death. The men sit on the rocks listening silently as they flit by like shadows, but no strong, deep voice joins in the fine tremulous notes that die out as silvery as the soft piping of a bird.

In the old war times the men sang in Tory—rousing battle strains that echoed far across the waters and made the gulls pause in bewildered circles as they heard. And those brave chants were handed down the centuries from father to son, while the island had its king and its independent laws. In his little territory the king—like greater monarchs—had his harper and seanachie to fan the flame of courage with tale and ballad of the fierce past, or to soothe his weary senses with gentler dreams through which the fair faces of women wandered. Those were the prosperous days of Tory. With the going of its kings the old customs went, and its glory.

There was no king to rule wisely and well when the dread famine fell upon the people. It seemed as if God's hand was lifted against them, for the fish deserted their fishing-ground, and the edible birds avoided the cliffs where they had been wont to build. The green things growing in the fields died from the drouth that followed the heavy cold rains, and food grew scarcer until nothing remained save the sea-wrack and the limpets clinging to the rocks. Men and women went about listless and idle, the glare of fever in their hungry eyes; while the little children sickened and mercifully died. In those days the songs were hushed, and one heard only lamentations or the shrill keening for the dead.

It was the gauntness in Mary Roarty's face that hurt Eoin MacHugh more than any pangs of hunger. He saw her fading day by day, and his anguish at the sight was like a sword thrust through his heart. How could he save her, how could he spare her? 'This was his one cry. She, his own *cailín deas* (pretty girl)—the treasure of his soul. Was death, grim white Death, to prove the stronger lover and drag her from his arms?

Eoin was known far and near as the Singing Fisherman. Through his blood generations of bards made music, and the beauty of his voice played upon the senses of his listeners as the sweet south wind might play upon the strings of a harp. It evoked a silent echo which hovered between joy and sorrow, and no one knew which feeling was the most to be desired. How one who had toiled on the sea from childhood had escaped injury to that exquisite voice was a marvel, yet it was so, and when he sang the tender Gaelic ballads of his own making no eye could keep the tears from falling. Many of his songs were made on Mary Roarty. "Mary of the Glinting Ringlets" he called her; or "Little Mary of the Lambs"—in memory of the days when they herded together on the bare headlands where is the mound that is called the House of Balor. "Mary, my Swan of Tender-ness," was another of the dear names he had for his love. When the famine had dealt its will on her there was scarce any beauty left either in her ringlets or in her young face, but to Eoin she was fairer than ever in her piteous dependence. The food that kept her alive was his giving, and his poor home awaited her coming—had awaited her for many a day. There, in his poet-fancies, he saw her, seated by the fireside, like a star shining through the smoke from the smouldering peat, and with the love in her face glorifying the bareness of her setting.

Sometimes he dreamed of a child in her arms; a little child with the mother's bright hair, and a hint of the father's strength in the tiny symmetry of its limbs. He could never make up his mind as to whether he wished the dream-child a boy or a girl. In his pride he thought he would like the boy better; that he might train him up a fearless fisherman, with a steady nerve that could dare the highest and most dangerous crags in search of the eggs of the gannet and other wild fowl. But then, the girl—the gentle, clinging girl. She would have his dear Mary's ways, and would go about like a smaller star in her mother's orbit, adding new radiance to their home. He could picture her with her knitting in her hand, bending to count the stitches by the light of the fire, in all the sedate industriousness which foreshadowed the woman in the child. And he knew what he would call her. Her name should be Aislinn, which in the poetical Gaelic means "a dream."

But Eoin's hopes were very far from realisation. Mary would not leave her widowed father, nor would he share her devotedness with another. Now that, withered with the famine, burnt with the fever, he hovered on the verge of the grave, her tender services were more essential to him than ever. Worn to a shadow, she nursed him through his death-sickness uncomplainingly, and, seeing the emaciation in every line of her face and figure, many there were to prophesy that never would Mary Roarty find a grey streak in her glinting hair.

When the sods had covered her father help came to Mary. A relative, living on the mainland, had heard of her distress, and brought a kind heart to the desolate girl's relief. She offered her a home in the green, sunny country that lay beyond the guardian hills across the strait, and Mary, won by the motherly warmth of her

embrace, accepted. It was the sad parting then between the young people.

“Mary, *a mhuirín*,” said Eoin, as they stood together on the uplands with the sea-wind blowing about them, “put your hand in mine and say the words after me :

“Neither life shall come between,
Nor death,
Nor silver’s sheen,
Not bitter breath
Of evil tongues
Shall tear apart
My heart—your heart.”

“Say it, my share of the world, say it.” And she said it after him, slowly and tearfully.

“Oh, my God, Mary *a stóir* (my treasure), the hunger was nothing to this, nor seeing the face of death. It is my heart you are rending from my bosom, and your little hands are round it clutching it, bruising it. They are such little hands—they should be kind and soft.”

She clung to him wildly. “I do not want to go, Eoin, *mo chroidhe* (my heart). I want to stay with you always.”

“And go barefooted over the rocks, *a stóir*, when it is in the little warm shoes you should be walking. And living on the fish and coarse meal from year’s end to year’s end, when the good fresh meat is beyond there for your eating. Ah, no, no! ’Tis in Erin anyways my thoughts will be after you. They will be following you through the grand streets and the grand houses, and ’tis I will be proud to think my girl is seeing all the beautiful sights. Maybe then, when I gather the silver, it is after my thoughts I will be going. Never fear, Mary *a rúin* (my secret love), but my feet will find the way to you.”

"There will be no one in Erin to make songs on me," said Mary wistfully.

Eoin smiled through his grief. "Better so, *cailín deas*, better so. It would not be right that there should be, for the new songs might put the old ones out of your memory."

She laid her head against his shoulder with a cry.

"There will be many a night here if God spares me," Eoin went on, "when I am out in my boat drifting over the dark water that I will be making new songs on you, Mary *mo chroidhe*! Making them in my mind that they may be ready for the singing to you when I start for the big town. And they will be finer songs than any I made before, because pain will be in them as well as joy, and I have learned now that pain is stronger and—even though it stabs one's heart—more to be sought than any joy, for through it we can guess the depth of love. Love is like the great far-reaching sea there, and pain is like the lead that we send down, down to find how deep it is. I have thought of all this since you talked of going, Mary *a dhílis* (my dear), and because of the pain I suffered I have learnt how much I love you. It is love in me that bids you go, that bids you take to the strange life in which I will not be. If I did not love you, I would keep you here in the poor island, where you would never have any comfort like what is in store for you in the rich town. That is the truth, God be my judge."

Mary had been gazing at him with a half-frightened look of wonder while he was speaking. This was surely a new Eoin, this man who talked unlike anything she had heard in her life before. And in his eyes there was a curious sad clearness, as if he saw beyond her sight, some vision that was not altogether a beatific one. She gave a little shudder.

“What is it, pulse of my heart?” he whispered in her ear. “Is it cold you are?” Then he drew her closer.

She clasped her arms about him and buried her face where the blue fishing jacket fell away from his tanned neck. He could feel her heart-beats upon his heart and the sobs that stirred her. Yet it was more emotion at the impending change in her fortunes that had unnerved her, rather than regret at leaving her lover and her home. Eoin did not guess this. In the simplicity of his own great passion he fancied she suffered as he himself was suffering. He bent his head until his cheek touched hers, tear-wet and deathly cold. They stood thus for a time in silence while the night-wind blew chill—and salty, in from the ocean. It was a quiet night, a night of stars. The dirge of the sea was so faint that it scarcely reached their ears, and the cry of a gull, almost as faint, sounded like the beat of a far-off bell as it flapped its lonely way across the waves. Eoin felt the cool peace envelop him like a blessing. The fever left his veins, his wild sorrow became soothed. He gently raised Mary’s fair head from its resting place and gazed long and earnestly into her eyes. Then he gave a sigh, and without a word their trembling lips clung together in the parting kiss.

With the spring the famine and sickness went from Tory. The fish came back in shoals, and the birds returned to their breeding places. It was as if a curse had been lifted. Eoin felt happier than he had been since Mary left, and his songs were heard again as he rowed home in the twilight or in the dawn trailing the full net behind his currach. He began to put by a bright bit of silver now and then. And it was noticed that he had the brisk expectant air of one with some great purpose in view.

Then the blow fell. One of the islanders, returning from Erin, had a wonderful tale to relate of a wedding he had seen—the wedding of Mary Roarty. Eoin's Mary of the Lambs, little Mary of the Ringlets, had married an elderly farmer—a fine match—so the man said, and had gone South with him to his home. Eoin was mending his nets in the midst of a group of fishermen when the other man told the story. He did not cry out, nor cease his work. Only his hands went as numb as death so that he could not feel the cords, and his heart turned to a thing of stone within him.

That night he was out late in a biting gale of wind and heavy rain. His catch was small, for he handled his lines unskilfully, and it was a stupid face he turned to the talk of his comrades. They whispered a little among themselves when, ere half the night was through, he set his prow for the shore, and rowed off alone. There was no song with him; he leaned over the oars almost double, scarce heeding the way he went. So the others saw as they watched him out of sight.

The morning found him stretched on his straw bed raving in the fever. He had one name only on his parched lips. "Mary, Mary," he cried unceasingly, "I am coming—coming," and he would break into snatches of song, hoarse and untuned. During the weary days and nights of watching those who tended him sent many a bitter thought after the girl. His recovery was slow; slower than is usual in the case of youth. "Some memory is vexing him," the doctor from the mainland said. "There is a weight of sorrow on his heart and his brain is tortured with it. I fear he will never be the same man again."

While he was in his convalescence Eoin made a new song. He had a very sweet air for it. The words were

sad as separation. He called it in the Gaelic *An Cailin T'réig Mé*—The Girl who Forsook Me, and when he had grown well enough to move out of doors he would sit on the stone beneath the window, and go over the verses monotonously, half aloud and half to himself. He never mentioned Mary's name now, but sometimes they found him stretched upon the headlands, his face buried in the sea-salt grass, lamenting, like one possessed. Then they knew that his grief was ever as a gaping wound.

By degrees his mind seemed to grow more clouded, until he had no memory for anything save the words of his song. He wandered over the island in all weathers, from dawn to nightfall, singing, and the men hearing that melancholy voice forever chanting the *caoine* of its buried hopes were forced to shudder at the sound. They might foregather to listen to the seanachies tell the old *ranns* their fathers had told before them of Torry in its ancient days; but the music that was wont to be a charm to their ears at such times fell strangely and suddenly out of repute with them. It grew to be almost a lost art. Perhaps the gloom born of the famine had scarcely left their souls; or the abrupt speech of Coll O'Heggarty might have been the cause. "Oh, let those pipes cease," he cried out once in the midst of a gathering. "They remind me of Eoin MacHugh. He went past me to-night like a ghost, and the wind shrieking round him. He was singing loud to deaden the noise of the wind. There! listen, listen! It is surely enough music we are having when that wail of his is never silent on Tory."

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It was seven years after Eoin's trouble fell upon him that one day a woman landed from a currach on the island. A slender fair woman she was: too young for the sorrow on her face.

"Take me to Eoin MacHugh," she said to the man who was the first to speak to her. "Take me to him if he is alive. If he is dead, take me to his grave."

"He is alive," he said, "but his mind is gone."

She hushed him with uplifted hand. "I know, I have known for years. But I could not come. I was not free."

"Why are you here now, Mary Roarty?"

"Because I am free. My man is dead."

"Christ's pity on you, woman dear."

"No, no," she almost cried. "Do not say it. I want no pity. I deserve no pity. I am free, Do you hear?" she shook the man's arm roughly, "I am free."

He looked at her wonderingly: "You will find him up yonder at the House of Balor," he said, and pointed towards the cliffs.

She walked away quickly. When she came near the rath she heard the faint voice intoning its sad song of her own perfidy. The plaintive words came very clear on the keen sea-air.

"O my sorrow, my bitter sorrow, that I am without her,
That was more to me than the sun in a speckled sky,
Than the safe white sands to a storm-tossed boat,
Or the cool grasses to feet grown weary."

Mary caught her breath. He did not perceive her, so she stood listening, gazing at the forlorn figure with a world of compassionate love in her eyes. His were staring straight out towards the blue rim of the ocean where the sky came down to meet the waves.

"Eoin," Mary's voice was sharp with suppressed anguish, "Eoin *a ghrádh*" (my love).

He turned mechanically at the sound of his name. His unseeing eyes roved over her.

"Eoin." She came nearer and sat beside him on the rock. "Do you not know me?"

He continued his interrupted song.

"'Tis she was fairer than wheat in the ripe sheaf,
The little ringlets of her fine and flowing."

"Oh, Eoin *mo chroidhe*," the woman cried passionately, throwing her arms about him and drawing the weather-blanchèd head to her bosom. "Have I brought you to this? Have I brought you to this?"

He drew himself away hastily, looking at her with a sudden frown.

"My God, to think that you would be shrinking from me," she wailed, taking his emaciated hand in hers. "Eoin, 'tis little Mary of the Lambs that is speaking—your own little Mary."

"Dead, dead," he muttered hoarsely.

"No, not dead, heart's dearest. She only went astray, foolish and weak and easily flattered that she was. She has come back to you."

"Dead," he repeated again, his vague gaze wandering from her face to the bunch of white moor grass he toyed with.

"Poor soul, no. Here is Mary beside you, loving you above all the world. And she never ceased to love you, for all that she took the other man."

He pushed her from him petulantly, and resumed his song.

"If I were a shepherd on the brown mountain,
'Tis I would be seeking her in the sheltered places."

Mary wrung her hands, tears streaming down her cheeks. Eoin was smiling as he sang. She followed his look out to where the sun was sinking, a globe of fire,

into the sea. The line of glory its radiance made across the water seemed a pathway between heaven and earth for the brown currachs dancing there.

“If I were a boat on the green billows,
’Tis I would rise higher than the foam to greet her,”

went on the plaintive strain. The shadow of the rath the islanders know as the House of Balor fell upon them now—a dark shadow, heralding the coming twilight. Then a cold wind crept inward from the ocean and the thin gray mass of the upland stirred and murmured restlessly. Eoin shivered as the damp mist gathered around them. Seeing this Mary rose and wrapped the black cloak she was wearing about his shoulders. She noticed then how his figure had shrunken in the fisherman’s suit of rough blue homespun.

Slipping her arm through his she raised him from his seat. “Eoin, come home with me,” she said gently. “You are my only care now. Come dear love, come.”

He suffered her to lead him down the hill to the cottage where he dwelt. Here Mary found the old woman who tended him. Her name was Aoife (Eefa) Ni Bhroin, and she was reputed to be very wise. She was cowering over the smouldering peats when they entered. The smoke hung thick about the rafters as she turned at the sound of their footsteps, so that her dim eyes peering through it did not at first recognise the new-comer.

“I am Mary Roarty.” The diffident accents smote familiarly upon old Aoife’s ear. “I am come back to Tory.”

Aoife drew nearer until she came close to the pair, still standing arm in arm.

“Is it really you, Mary Roarty?” There was menace in the question. “Have you come back to end the work you began?”

"Oh, Aoife," Mary cried tremulously. "I have come back to undo the harm, with the help of God." She dropped Eoin's arm and caught that of the old woman.

"How can you do it, girl? Look at him, look at him well. The wreck of the young strong man he was, poor, grief-crazed, the pity of the island—and all through you. Can you bring peace to him who has so long known unrest, or light to his clouded mind? The task will be hard; for heart-break and cold and hunger have done their share. Ay, 'tis often he and I have had little to keep us alive, though all were kind and spared what they could. No, you have come to see him die. I had a vision of your coming night after night—just as you were standing there, and in the vision he lay at your feet. The blight of death is on him even now. I see it. Do you not see it too, girl? What have you done to him?"

The outburst of her anger ended in a shrill wail as she ran towards Eoin where he leant against the wall, trembling and very white.

"Come to the fire, *a leanbh mo chroidhe*"—(O child of my heart!)—her shrill voice had become soft as a mother's whispering over her child. "Come and get warm, *a dhílis*." He would not stir. Mary knelt down suddenly on the uneven floor and lifted her hands to heaven.

"Give him back his mind, O God, dear God," she supplicated wildly; "give him back what I helped to take away. And, if I may, let me suffer in his stead."

Then as she knelt, a strange thing happened. She glanced towards Eoin to find his eyes fixed upon her. The intelligence had returned to them, and there was a puzzled frown between his brows.

"Who is it?" he asked, passing his hand across his eyes in a dazed fashion.

"It is Mary Roarty—the woman who betrayed you," cried old Aoife bitterly.

"Mary—Roarty." He seemed unable to comprehend.

"Yes, Mary Roarty, who left you for the rich widower."

He looked down at Mary's bent head, where she still knelt on the floor.

"Little Mary," he said slowly, like one feeling his way, "Little Mary of the Ringlets?"

Mary rose to her feet and would have rushed to his arms.

"Little Mary, who left and betrayed you," cried Aoife again.

His face changed and grew strained with anger. "I remember, I remember now," he spoke in a hushed, horror-stricken tone. "She broke my heart."

"Oh, Eoin, forgive me, forgive," wailed Mary. "I am free now. I have come back to you. Let me make amends."

"You broke my heart."

"Do not say it, Eoin; my sorrow is heavy enough without hearing that from your lips."

"What is it to my sorrow, Mary Roarty? You broke my heart."

"I have repented," she wept, "repented with bitter tears. God has forgiveness for even the worst of us, and you—you who used to be so gentle, Eoin, are you going to let me go forth without comfort and pardon?"

"I cannot forgive you," he answered drearily, "it is too much to ask."

"As you hope for mercy, Eoin, be kind to me. I have repented sorely, God knows. My life beyond there was the hard life; full of memories of other times that made the days a weariness and the nights an agony. Oh!

Eoin *mo chroidhe*, open your heart to mine again, for it was the pain-racked lonely heart I carried in Erin."

He turned abruptly from her clinging hands, and crossing quickly by her, entered his bedroom, bolting the door behind him.

"That is your answer, Mary Roarty," Aoife said, pointing to the closed door. "Now you may go."

Mary crouched outside the door and beat her hands upon the callous wood. "Oh," she cried, "only speak one word of forgiveness and I shall go out of your sight forever. Just one word, Eoin. I cannot go until you say it. Just one word."

But no answer came. "He never loved me," she moaned, rocking to and fro. "He never loved me." Then she remembered remorsefully their sad parting on the uplands. "Oh, he did love me, poor Eoin, he must have loved me. If he had loved me less he never would have suffered so."

She rose stiffly to her feet and sat in his chair by the dying fire. The night came down and its dark hours glided over her bowed head, but she did not heed their passing. A stupor of misery was on her, through which the heavy breathing of old Aoife, asleep in her corner, seemed like the loud sigh of wind on a night of storm. Its monotonous rise and fall lulled Mary to sleep likewise. At length a chill touch upon her hand aroused her from her uneasy slumbers. She started and stared with wide-open eyes into the dark.

"Mary," came to her ears in a faint whisper.

The fear sprang from her heart to her throat and strangled her voice.

"Mary *mo chroidhe*."

At that the spell upon her senses relaxed and she leaned towards him. She could not see him, she only

knew he was there by her side in the darkness holding her hand in his.

“Is it you, Eoin?”

“Yes, pulse of my heart, it is I. Put your arms around me, Mary, and love me. Oh, love me, Mary, love me. I have been so long without your love.”

“*A ghrádh mo chroidhe, a ghrádh, a ghrádh!* she crooned the sweet words over him piteously. He stroked her face with his thin fingers; then he laid his cold cheek upon hers with a sob.

“They were the cruel, cruel years, Mary *a stóir*, that kept you from me. Where were you, Mary, and where was I? I do not understand. I feel as if I have awakened from a long forgetfulness. Was it all a dream, Mary, your going, and my loneliness—a bad deceitful dream?”

“Oh, my grief, it was no dream, Eoin dear. I was a wicked girl who foolishly thought riches were happiness and suffered sore for the thought. But now that you have forgiven me, I will be putting all memory of those black days away.”

“I spoke bitter words, Mary, when you knelt on the floor there, and held out your little hands to me. There was a strange hate in my heart, but it is gone now, my Mary of the Ringlets. It must have been a part of the bad dream. How could I hate you at all? If there was any reason I have forgotten why.”

“Do not try to remember it now, Eoin. Let us think of the new happy life we shall spend together.”

“Yes, that will be better,” he said contentedly, “that will be better.” He pondered a while. “There’s a song running through my head, Mary: a song I must have heard somewhere. Listen, *a stóir*——”

“Where did I hear that song, Mary?”

Mary's whole body tingled with anguish as she listened. He was as one groping for the light in darkness. She saw that his brain was wrestling with recollections too complex for its weakness, and she tried to change the current of his thoughts.

"Oh," she said gaily, "'tis I will be expecting great songs from you now. And all about myself, mind, or it is growing jealous I will be."

A pale cold gleam came creeping through the little window. She looked down at his face upon her bosom, and saw that he lay with closed eyes. Suddenly he started up, and held his hand against his ear, listening.

"That is God's voice," he said joyfully, turning to her with a smile.

She only heard a cock crowing faintly in the distance.

"I am cold," he whispered, "and tired, Mary."

She folded her heavy cloak close around him as he laid his head back again on her breast. After a time she felt that he slept, and then the balm of sleep descended too upon herself.

A scream, wild, piercing, horror-stricken, recalled her to waking life. She opened her eyes to behold the face of Aoife peering into hers. The old woman was striving to draw Eoin from her arms.

"Let him be," cried Mary, "he is mine now. Let him be."

"Nay, but he is God's," said Aoife solemnly. "God gave him peace while you slept, and heeded not."

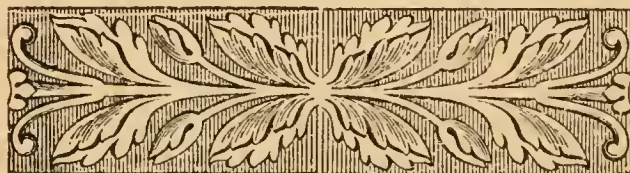
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All through the two days and nights of Eoin's wake when Mary kept her place beside his body and would not stir, she fancied she heard a voice singing the song the dead man sang on the uplands, on the day of her home-

coming. The words and air were very distinct. They beat on her brain while she said her Rosary over and over for his soul until she sometimes lost the trend of her prayers listening. And even when he was laid to rest with his kinsfolk on the wind-blown slope, the spirit-song did not cease. It followed her everywhere she went, until at length she found herself repeating it aloud.

“God has sent it for my Purgatory,” she said. She sang it very faintly, so that deaf old Aoife could not hear, but the girl-children passing by, who came to look with curious eyes upon beautiful Mary Roarty, whose cruelty had driven Eoin MacHugh astray, listened and loved the song and the singer. The only ease of heart that Mary knew was when she hearkened the doleful chant in the sweet young lisping voices; for they took pleasure in singing with her. So it happened in time that these children crooned it over their infants at the breast, and that a later generation of babies were hushed to the same lullaby; though long before then Mary of the Ringlets had joined Eoin beyond the gates of death.

And this is why the women only raise their voices in song on Tory.



Sorcha Ruadh's Troubles.

SORCHA RUADH'S TROUBLES.

DONEGAL has lost count of her exiles, they have been so many. Yet, in all their wanderings, north or south, east or west, the faith of their fathers, and the love of their motherland, have ever been first with them through poverty and wealth, and it was one of these—far away and tortured with heart-hunger—who, keeping in memory the homestead in the Finn Valley, that was his birth-place, sent in a letter to the old people the sorrowful crude little song that *Sorcha Ruadh* sang as she stepped lightly between her wooden pails of sweet spring water—

“Farewell to Stranorlar and Ballybofey—

These towns they are beautiful, gallant, and gay ;

These towns they are beautiful, rare to be seen ;

An' they're close to Finn Water, nigh Dreenan bleach-green.

When I think upon Dreenan my heart it is sad—

My friends and acquaintances have all gone abroad ;

Far, far they have wandered from that distant shore—

Then fare-you-well, Dreenan, an' sweet Edenmore.”

Her voice still held a note of youthfulness, and rang out proudly, as if there lurked in her breast a consciousness that it was not unpleasant to listen to, nor, indeed, was the time so remote when Teague M'Goulrick's wife shone as a sort of *prima-donna* in the rural society of the

district where she had been born and bred. But it was at a wedding or a christening that her singing met with its full reward, for, though an invited guest, she usually took upon herself the onerous duty of entertainer as well, and song followed song until the lark wakened up outside and carolled back in answer. And who so openly glad of her success as her husband, Teague—first and most constant of her many admirers. After twenty-five years of wedded life he was her lover still, eliciting from Bible Andy the eucomium that they were “Like two singing birds in a nest—the lilt was seldom off their tongues, and the hard word was never heard between them.”

She made a bright, sturdy picture in the early sunshine as she walked along straightly and swiftly. Her red hair, not golden, nor bronze, but aggressive warm red, shone like a flame, her brown freckled face was very pleasant and brave, and her strong white teeth flashed now and again in a gay, irrepressible smile. She was in a hurry this morning, though the blackbird called to her from the thorn-tree, and the young frogs were croaking in the ditches alongside the road. Usually she stopped to listen to the cheerful sounds, and out of the happiness of her own heart made reply in mocking imitation; but there was no time for such trifling to-day, for Teague was about to start with the pigs for Stranorlar fair, and his wife must be safe within the four walls of their cottage before he set out.

“It ’ud be terrible onlucky if the boneens met me”—she would say when the neighbours raised a laugh over the manœuvres of herself and Teague—“an’ that’s why I have to hide in the hedge many’s the time when he comes drivin’ them up the road. An’ there’s no doubt at all but I’m red-headed, aye, the worst sort of red-headed, too. If it was only like ould Miss Mackey’s sunburnt crimps, not a cratur need be afraid o’ me.”

But, "the more haste the worse speed," and *Sorcha Ruadh*, glancing down the hilly road, saw the "rint," as Teague called them, rooting calmly here and there, and her man himself peeling a long sally-rod a short distance off. He was singing as well as she, and the words reached her clearly :—

"Oh, rise up, Willy Reilly, an' come along wi' me,
I mean for to go wi' ye an' leave this coun-ter-ie ;
To leave my father's dwellin', his houses an' free lan'—
An' away went Willy Reilly an' his dear Colleen Bawn."

She was close to a gate leading into one of their own little fields, and so quite safe while she stood and watched him unperceived for a moment. When the rod was peeled to his satisfaction, he gave the nearest *boneen* a cut with it that created an abrupt disturbance in the mind of that lazy animal, causing it to trot up the hill in terror, followed by its surprised companions.

"An' away went Willy Reilly an' his dear Colleen Bawn," sang Teague emphatically.

The high notes were a marvel, and his wife, as he ended the verse in a sentimental fashion, peculiarly his own, could not control her impulse to laugh out aloud from her shelter behind the hedge. He started slightly, until, turning in the direction of the sound, his eye caught a glimpse of familiar red, when with an amusing access of dignity he straightened himself and walked on at a business-like speed after the unruly pigs. He winked knowingly as he went, stopping to look back at the bend of the road.

"Poor Sally," he murmured, "she's ever an' always the same, whether the sun shines down on her or the clouds

are dark an' heavy. Brave an' true you always wor, *a bhean a' tighe*, an' brave an' true you'll be to the end. God bless ye!"

And *Sorcha Ruadh*, for her part, putting down her pails on the roadway, stood gazing after him, shading her tear-dim eyes with her hand:—

"Ah, Teague, my man," she said, "there's little male in the chest, an' the stockin's nigh empty, but so long as the love holds out between you an' me, I'm content," and smiling through her tears she took the three lucky steps, not to be omitted, towards his retreating form.

One trouble, and one alone, had entered into the happy life of these two. They would scarcely acknowledge it by this name, for Teague M'Goulrick was inordinately proud of his only son, and *Sorcha Ruadh* adored him; but the handsome, dark-eyed boy was an enigma to the parents. Full of vague ambitions and dreams beyond their ken, imbued with aspirations in which their contented thoughts could have no place, he seemed to belong to another sphere than theirs. He was as sweet-natured as his mother's son could be; patient and thoughtful in the little incidents of their everyday life—helpful in all the farm-work with his father, never idle, never sullen, and yet they felt that the lad's days were embittered by discontent and unfulfilled desires. They could not understand him, and he knew it, and suffered tenfold agony accordingly. Their sufferings were as intense as his own, and a sense of inferiority gave them an added pang, until they felt sometimes as if he were a stranger in whom they had no part. Yet, though each was conscious by instinct of the other's misery, husband and wife never discussed their trouble—it would have seemed like disloyalty to the boy—but in their own loving, homely way they strove to dispel the shadow

brooding in the dark eyes, and graving melancholy lines on the young face, by their genial plans for his comfort and amusement. Hugh was quick enough to see the pathetic little subterfuges, and to note the jealousy with which they regarded his silent moods, the books that he pored over in the long winter nights, and the solitary rambles he took in the summer gloamings up to the hill-side, where he could stretch himself on the heather alone with his dreams. He was counted "terrible unsociable" by all the neighbours, and the girls of the valley, strolling down to the riverside with their knitting, in the cool of the pleasant evenings, whither they were usually followed by the boys, quite by accident, found that their simple allurements were thrown away on "M'Goulrick's Hugh." Into those cherished dreams of his no woman had entered as yet, so the girls turned their saucy glances upon more responsive admirers, and left him to the quietude he sought.

But there was an awakening in store for the boy, and the inward voice urging him out into the strife of the world was to be hushed by another dearer summons that came sweet and low, like the song of the linnet at sunset, and called him to love and happiness instead, making every vein of his heart flush warm with gladness, until for him earth took a nobler beauty, and the heavens a higher and holier grandeur.

It was a simple thing, indeed, or so it would appear to many, that accomplished all this—only the coming of tall, slender Grania Mulkerian to live with her aunt and uncle in their childless home at Carrickmagrath; yet to Hugh M'Goulrick, faultily imaginative as he was, it seemed as if she came in all her tender womanliness for his sake alone, a ray of glory to brighten his sombre life, and satisfy the undefined yearning that had tortured him for years.

Sorcha Ruadh was the girl's godmother, and the long separation had been powerless to lessen the affection that prevailed between them. Grania made it almost her first duty to visit the elder woman, and one day Hugh, entering the kitchen unexpectedly, saw her—her brown hair bent over the flowering in her hand—sitting close beside his mother, whose kindly fingers stroked the waving tresses lovingly. As he stopped abruptly, a few paces off, she lifted her sweet gray eyes and looked full into the dark ones gazing down at her. He drew back and stood speechless. It was as if a flash of lightning had blinded him, and blotted out his memory of all things, save the beauty of those gray eyes, and the shy smile that dwelt in them.

His mother broke the silence—"Tis little Grania grown up and come back to her aunt and uncle, don't ye mind her, boy?—little Grania that ye took bird-nestin' long ago, and brought home many's the time cryin', with a thorn in her foot, for ye'd always tramp in among the whins and blackberry bushes—the rover that ye wor. Spake to her, boy, an' say she's welcome home."

How could he speak with those sweet eyes smiling and waiting, yet he did somehow, though his voice sounded unreal even to his own ears.

"So you did not know me, Hugh," she said, gently—" 'tis a long time, sure enough, still, I thought you'd remember." She looked at him half reproachfully, like a disappointed child, and he felt the guilty blush burning over cheek and brow in answer, but to himself he murmured afterwards—"How could I guess that it wasn't an angel sitting by my mother's fireside, and the sunlight falling in a golden shower all over and around her, why, it was shining in her eyes as well, and that took the speech away from me entirely."

For many days after he could never meet her without the crimson flushing his dark cheek, and an awkward silence making his presence somewhat of an embarrassment to her. But by degrees her gentle ways made him feel less conscious, and it was then she learned the longing that was in the heart of her old playmate. He would talk to her by the hour of his love for their country:—

“That’s why I’d like to be a soldier in her cause, to show to the whole world that life is sacred only for her sake after God’s, and that death is ten thousand times welcome if it would but lead her one little step on the road to Freedom. And day by day I fret for her, Grania, just as if she were my real, breathing mother, and in my hand lay the power of drying up her tears. That’s how it is—I feel her suffering as a personal pain, and night and morning I pray that I may be called upon to help her, and endure if need be. Sometimes I have longed for comforts that my poor father and mother have never had, that I can never find here, but I’ve learned to put the longing aside and say to myself that Ireland has been praying and longing for her Dawn more than seven centuries, and if I am to be her soldier I must learn to be heroic in little ways as well as great.”

The girl’s gray eyes reflected back the glow that burned in the brown ones, as they sat and talked thus in a little world of their own, while *Sorcha Ruadh*, listening intently to every word, would shake her red head now and then in a mixed wonder of admiration and reproof. It seemed as if God had intended those two for each other from the beginning. There was no jarring note in their friendship—his thoughts, his hopes, his dreams, were to be like her own. She entered into his fancies fondly, unreservedly, rejoicing in his pleasures and grieving in his grief. He hardly understood how strong and

true her affection was—there is a limit to a man's sympathy for a woman, but none to a woman's for a man whom she comes nigh to loving; and so it ended for Grania, who awakened from her dreaming to find that she had crossed the border line between earth and paradise.

The knowledge came upon her suddenly one May eve down by the river, when the hawthorns loaded the air with fragrance, and the daisies gleamed like little stars in the short damp grass. She had gone there alone that she might strive to understand what life would be without Hugh, for, at last, wearied by the lad's persistence, Teague M'Goulrick had consented to give him his passage money to America out of their scanty hoard.

"I doubt if ye'll be happier, boy, than your mother an' me would have made ye, but start, in God's name, an' try for yerself," he said.

The poor soft-hearted mother smiled through her tears, and held his head on her shoulder while he told her in a broken voice that it was for *all* their sakes he desired to go, for all their sakes—and for Grania's, too, he added slowly.

Sorcha Ruadh noted the changed tone, and a keen stab of jealousy went through her.

"Ye're terrible fond o' Grania, darlin', aren't ye?" she asked.

He lifted his head at once, and spoke out eagerly—"Oh, mother, I love her, I love her, I love her. I can't tell you how much or how madly. She's everything to me. I'm wild at the thought of leaving her, but how can I win her if I've nothing to offer—so I must go. You'll watch over her when I'm away, won't you, my own kind mother? I couldn't help this, dear; I meant to keep at home and be a comfort to you, and tried to get

rid of my fancies—then Grania came, and when we talked together they grew stronger than ever—she seemed like a part of my hopes, and I found that I must have been waiting for her always. And she doesn't know—she looks upon me as a brother almost, though I believe I could teach her to care if I had a chance of making a home for her like other men. I must try and make it, mother, and you'll guard her for me, and talk about me now and then, so that she'll remember."

Jealousy and grief still wrenched at her heart-strings, but *Sorcha Ruadh* overcame them.

"Tell her yer story yerself, *a gradh*," she said, "an' God speed ye. That's the worst o' men—they never know when a woman is breakin' her heart for them, because she keeps the smile before the world, when maybe 'tis her mornin' an' evenin' prayer that somebody 'ud only spake the word she's dyin' to hear. Never judge the girl ye love by her face, son, but go an' tell her. Don't wait for riches—love is the best of all, an' some of us 'ud rather starve on a crust, an' be loved, than live in a gran' palace without it. Look at yer father an' me—we had a hard struggle many's the time, an' we knew what the hunger was, too, but we had the love between us, an' we had *you*."

The boy caressed her tenderly as she clung to him in a paroxysm of grief for a moment. "Go, darlin'," she repeated, "an' spake to yer little girl, an' bid her come to the mother that's waitin' for her."

Hugh felt that Grania would be watching for him by the riverside as usual, and there he found her leaning against a tree trunk, with her slender hands folded idly in her lap, and her grey eyes full of mourning. She noted the quiver in the sensitive lips, the pallor on the dark face, and waited for him to speak.

"I've told father and mother, Grania dear, that I've made up my mind to go away and do something with my life. They wouldn't listen at first, but now they see it is best."

"When do you leave, Hugh?" she faltered.

"The sooner the better, or I can't go at all. God pardon me for giving them this grief, but I must ease their lot of pinching and grinding work, though they are happy enough in it, somehow, and then I must be worthy of you, Grania. Oh, my dearest, don't you know it—that I love you, every hair on your dear brown head, every smile in your sweet, sweet eyes. Have I startled you, *a rúin*? Then forgive me, but I love you beyond all expression—you are the one woman in the universe for me—the one star to draw me from sinful ways into the upward path you tread. I can't tell you how I feel, how undeserving I am of you, but if you would only give me one grain of hope to carry away into my new strange wanderings, it would help to keep me strong and brave and true. *One little word, dearest.*"

And Grania; she rose from her seat under the blossoming chestnut, and placing one hand on the lad's dark head, with the other she raised his sorrowful face to her own and kissed it.

"It is the first time I've done it to any man, love," she whispered, "but now let it bear comfort to your heart. Whether the waiting be short or long, whether you come back to me or never come again, I will be watching for you, God granting, either here or beyond the grave. My love is yours for all time, and my faith and my hope."

What need of further words between them when their souls had spoken in the agony of impending separation; but they clung to each other in a silence that was more fraught with tenderness than any speech could be.

Yet Hugh's departure was not so near as either imagined. The old folk, losing courage at the last, begged their boy to stay until after the harvest, and as he looked on his father's bent form, and at his mother's wan smile, that tried to be brave, he promised.

June came in with torrents of heavy rain that lasted almost without intermittance throughout July. Such a wet season had rarely been known in a country that suffered much from heavy floods, and the farmers discussed anxiously the fate of the crops, dotted here and there with pools of water, and beaten down with the incessant showers. The damp heat pervaded the whole valley, bringing fever in its train. First it attacked the little children, and then the kindly parish priest, journeying between the grief-stricken households, fell a victim to the insidious disease. Lamentations arose from end to end of the district; in the graveyard every day saw fresh pits open to receive the pallid holocausts, and no man knew when his own hour might come.

Grania went about like an angel of mercy from one bedside to the other, soothing the wild ravings of a frightened sufferer, or wiping the death-damp off a brow from whose worn pitifulness God's Hand had banished the pain. She was untiring in her sympathy and gentle attentions to the distraught people. Night after night she sat watching and praying, until shadows ringed her sweet grey eyes, and the lovely bloom forsook her cheeks. Hugh M'Goulrick shared her vigils as often as it was possible, and in vain begged her to take a rest. He grew full of dread at sight of the weariness that brooded over her, though she never complained, and only smiled when he held her little thin hand against his lips.

At last a day came when her devotedness cost her dear, and the news went abroad that Grania Mulkerian was down with the fever.

The sick, who had learned to look for her presence near them, might call and call to her, but the soft voice never answered their distressing cries. Never on earth again would she press an aching head, nor lift a little ice-cold child from its mother's clinging arms to prepare it for the tomb.

The Great Summoner had touched her with his wings, and the gates of Heaven were opened wide to let her through.

One poor boy, who loved her better than all the world, knelt in speechless agony by her side, while her burning lips breathed his name faintly and fondly. His strained dark eyes never left her face, and his fingers kept their frantic grasp of hers even when the pure soul had forsaken its earthly tenement. When the mourners had left her to the last sleep he fell upon the grave, and lay there in an apathy of despair, without sigh or tear, and those who came to seek him in the twilight, raising his head with kindly hands, feared that his anguished spirit had gone to join hers beyond the skies.

Ever after he went about with the look of one seeking for something lost. His father's hay grew tardily ripe in the meadows—the sodden fields needed draining—the thatch over their heads gave sign of wear and tear, but from Hugh M'Goulrick all interests in life had departed when the clay was piled over the gray-eyed girl he worshipped. The old people endured this ordeal for a time, until they saw that the boy's salvation lay in a change of scene. So they hinted to him, diffidently, that the passage-money had been kept safe against his departure, rolled up in the old stocking in the chest. He made no reply to the suggestion, nor referred to it again, but it was evident that though he might resent any intrusion upon his grief, yet he seemed to turn more grate-

fully to his mother than he had done during the more poignant period of his desolation.

At last the blow fell, and the pain of parting with their only son was added to the trouble already weighing on the overburdened hearts of *Sorcha Ruadh* and her husband. He held out no hope of returning to his home, but bade them good-bye with a solemnity that seemed meant for ever, and they understood and blessed him in the soft impressive Gaelic of their native valley.

A few letters reached the lonely couple, telling how he had joined Meagher's Brigade, and giving an account of what had befallen him. He wrote that a soldier's death was the only boon he craved, except their loving prayers.

When the roll was called on the morning of December 14th, 1862, there was no response from Private Hugh M'Goulrick, for he lay face downwards on the blood-stained slope at Fredericksburg, with a bullet through his breast. His comrades, in after-days, by many a camp-fire, told how this quiet Irish lad had been the bravest of the brave, fighting with the grimmest determination in the wake of the General, and when the dead were being removed from the battle-field, he was found lying close to the earthworks, behind which the Georgian Militia had taken their stand.

When the news reached the old people it found them somewhat prepared—though their grief was beyond all earthly consolation, and the last glint of red in *Sorcha Ruadh's* hair faded slowly afterwards, until it grew as white as one of the nodding blossoms of the bog-cotton. Her song was heard no more by the banks of Finn Water, and the blackbird might whistle from the garden hedge without fear of rivalry; her singing days were over when her son clasped hands with sorrow. The meeting Above

was now her sole desire, and on balmy summer evenings, when she had put everything to rights within the little cottage, *Sorcha Ruadh* would lead her feeble husband to the stone seat under the clinging honeysuckle outside their door, and so sitting together, and talking of their dear, dead boy, and Grania, they prayed God in his mercy not to part them, but to send the last call for both together.



By the Misty Burn.

BY THE MISTY BURN.

UP on Gortawarla the heather grew so thick and tall that the two children who crouched in the nook they had made there were hidden as if in a little nest where they could exchange confidences undisturbed, and kiss each other in childish joy of the companionship. Beside them, on a bed of soft grass, lay a fiddle, which the boy eyed with tender affection, reaching out his thin hand to touch it lovingly. He was a handsome lad, dark-curled, and with a high clever brow, but the pallor on his face, and the weariness in the brown eyes were sad to see. A crutch lying near told the tale of his sufferings, and why a thrill of pain rang ever in his voice.

The girl was a small, elfin, agile creature, red-haired, and violet-eyed. She was like a streak of sunshine against the dark boy. " 'Tis the bright little blossom she is," people said, and only her father's second wife thought otherwise, having no children of her own. So the love that came bubbling up from the heart of Una MacFelimy was given, in all its lavishness, to the crippled lad from the mill, since in her home there was none to prize it. When she could steal an hour from the herding in the summer afternoons she would run panting up the slope, to the trysting-place, and in the sobbing and laughing of Shameen's fiddle she found her joy. He had a wonderful way with it. His slender body used to quiver with passionate sympathy as he played, and his

touch was delicately firm and true. In these treasured moments Una was his sole audience and critic, and in her violet eyes he read his praise or blame.

It was when Shameen was slowly recovering from the terrible fall that had crippled him for life, and old Cormac MacKenna used to come with his fiddle to soothe him, that Roger O'Cahan gave the Little Red Lark to his son. The name was Shameen's own. "For it is the little red lark she will be surely, father dear, when I learn to play on her, and she'll sing all the songs you love to hear," he said, clutching the new fiddle to his breast, and the father turned away with a sigh as the eyes of his dead wife looked at him gratefully out of the pinched pale face.

Shameen lay back on his pillows and gave himself up to the happiness of possession. He kissed the fiddle through a rain of tears.

"Oh, fiddle dear, fiddle *mo chroidhe*," he cried tenderly, "my own little fiddle. Look at the little strings of her, and the shine all over her, and the little keys that are so white and smooth. Oh fiddle, *a ghradh*, sure it is my heart you are, and, when I wake the music that's in me you'll speak it all out on your beautiful strings. What will Una MacFelimy say at all, at all?"

For hours he sat there, oblivious of the flight of time, drawing the bow softly to and fro. His dreams were well-nigh a living ecstasy—they were so sweet.

"It is yourself will not be slow to learn," said old Cormac, when he came to give him his first lesson, "for she knows you already, and when a fiddle knows you, you needn't care how the wind blows or the world wags, if you have the music in you. She'll bring you peace if your heart's sore with trouble, and friendship if you're lonely; and she'll make you forget the hunger and thirst

when the poverty's on you. Ah, true, Shameen Beag, the gift is yours, and God send you speed with it."

It was not long then until Shameen knew the old man's repertoire by heart, and after that he began to make little airs of his own. To these he used to sing verses composed on the subjects which affected him most at the time; the trill of a bird rising from the heather; the fall of the hawthorn blossoms in a shower of pink and white on the grass below; the swish of the great mill-wheel as it churned the water into froth under his gable-window. He was happy with a glad, grateful happiness, yet in every note he played a sadness lurked, as if in spite of himself the boy's soul was drenched with sorrow. His father said he believed Shameen thought and prayed in music, as he heard the strains come softly from the gable-room upstairs. The neighbours called it unnatural: "The boy is being destroyed entirely by his fiddling and his fancies. He sits there day after day by the Burn-side, fiddling, fiddling, always, except when he is poring over a book, and it is not a word he will be giving you when you speak; he will let you pass by as if you were a ghost, and he had no eyes or ears for anything but his own dreams."

One day quite a flutter of excitement was caused in the drowsy village by the sight of Shameen limping down the road in animated converse with the fairy-woman, Shivaun Sheehy. She was a half-witted vagrant, with a rather bad reputation around the countryside. It was said she blinked the cattle, and was accustomed to say her prayers backward, which meant that her spells might have power over her enemies. She came begging to Kilmeena every summer, sleeping under the hedges or in some unguarded barn. One of her accomplishments was fortune-telling, which the foolish young lovers of the

place often encouraged, unknown to their elders. Charms and love potions, too, she carried round, in her ragged pack, and had a keen eye to a bargain in her dealings. But no one ever thought to see the quiet boy, whose shyness made him avoid the social life of the village, standing with his hand in hers, and his eyes riveted on her withered face.

“ ’Tis telling him his fortune she is surely,” they exclaimed in amazement, watching the pair from their doorways. “ Telling him his fortune, no less! Well, God help the poor *garsún*, for he’s lost what little sense he had at last. What fortune could she be telling him that’s a cripple and half-astray into the bargain? ”

It was by mere accident that Shameen had met her there. As she passed him by she tottered in weariness, and the bundle on her shoulders slipped from its insecure fastenings. Observing this, the boy, hurrying forward, stooped to pick it up. She took the bundle from him without a word, looking into his eyes long and fixedly. Then she lifted his right hand and peered closely at the lines on his palm.

“ So, so,” she muttered at last in her high cracked voice. “ You are another one with the eyes to see but not the sense to use them. Oh, boy dear, there a *cailín* will be waiting for you when your day comes to be a man, a sweet *cailín*, with a heart of gold, and the soul of a dove, and she’ll love you—that she will, a *mhílis*—more than life and beyond death. You have the music in you, too. Well, she will stir it to the very depths, and in every note you play you will hear her. Listen for her and her footfall will be near you; call her and she will come; love her and her love will be stronger than death. Don’t let her pass by, or the sorrow will be on you till your dying day; and you’ll never be rid of the loneliness

till the shroud is wrapped about you. Though there is a blight on you, and you'll never be like other men, her love will burn the fiercer for that, *mo bhuachaill*. Mind now what old Shivaun says, for it is put into my heart to know and my tongue never lies." She spoke rapidly, with many gesticulations. Her speech was in Gaelic, and its picturesque diction made the boy feel rather than hear. He stood wondering and trembling when she had left him and gone her way. Then he turned towards Gortawarla, longing for the quiet of its heathery crest in this new and most unexpected sensation that had befallen him.

He lay, his fiddle resting beside him, stretched out on the mountain blossoms, thinking deeply, when the voice of Una MacFelimy broke in upon his reverie. She threw herself down panting. An excited curiosity flamed in her violet eyes, and rang shrilly in her eager greeting.

"Oh, what did the little fairy woman say to you, Shameen?"

Shameen Beag twisted round in the heather half-petulantly, while his dark brows met in a sudden frown above his beautiful eyes.

"Is it what the little witch-woman said to me, Una MacFelimy, you want to know? Well, then 'tis not myself will tell it, not even to you."

Una looked at him in amazement, not comprehending this first refusal from his lips. He saw the surprise in her face, and his voice grew gentler.

"'Tis a secret, so it is, *a chailín óg*, between her and me, and you'd never understand the wonder of it, and the fear. For it is fear that is with me since she spoke and told me——"

He broke off, suddenly realising how near he had drifted towards confidence.

"Told you what, Shameen, *a ghradh?*"

"Now, *Una Ruadh*, 'tis no use to ask me, for this is my own secret and you have nothing to do with it. It is about a lovely lady that I am to marry when I am a man." He smiled proudly. "But I'll tell you no more. No, not even one single word more."

"A beautiful lady, Shameen! Who is she, and where does she live?"

"That I don't know," replied the boy, "but she is somewhere in the world and waiting for me, and she loves me truly wherever she may be. She is so beautiful, so beautiful! and when the old woman held my hand I seemed to see her standing there in the sunlight."

"But you said you would marry me," cried Una vehemently. "You always said you would marry none but me."

"Oh, that was before I knew," said Shameen calmly. "It is different now, and I am bound to her."

Tears stood thick on Una's long fair lashes, and her small red mouth quivered piteously. She laid her bright tangled head against his black one with a sob.

"Vo, vo, vo," she wailed. "Shameen, is this all the love you have for me that you'd go away to marry a stranger. O, vo, sure you don't mean it, Shameen, *a chuisle?*"

There was a touch of impatience in his voice as he turned to soothe her. "Don't cry so, *a chailín óg*. It won't be till I am a man, and somebody will be coming for yourself maybe before that."

At this Una's tears fell faster, and she buried her face upon his shoulder. "Shameen," she whispered, "it wasn't me grown up you saw—was it now? Had she e'er a look of me at all?"

'You, Una MacFelimy. You! Did I not say that she was a beautiful strange lady whose heart is half of

my heart, and whose soul is twin of my soul. And how could that be you? You are only a little country girl, and she was like a queen."

At this the tangled red head was lifted haughtily, and a flash came into the tear-wet eyes. "Very well, Shameen O'Cahan," she said fiercely. "Go to your lady. I'll not hinder you. Maybe 'tis like the lady of the castle beyond she'll be—sweet outside and bitter within, and the tongue of her like a two-edged sword. What will you do then, Shameen?"

He moved wearily away from her. "I think I will play," he said, "for I am tired, and you are cruel, Una MacFelimy."

At this the girl's arm went round his neck in a passionate embrace. "There now, there now, Shameen dear," she murmured, as tender as any mother, "there now. Sure I wouldn't vex you for the whole wide world."

He returned her kiss gravely, and took up his fiddle, pacified, forgetful for the moment of all else but his music. "It is the Song of the Misty Burn I will be playing you, now, *a chailín óg*," he said. "I played it last night until I got frightened all by myself in the dark. The ghosts walked about in the corners, or maybe 'twas the shadows moving—but I thought them ghosts. The little witch-woman said I'd see wonderful things, but that they'd never harm me."

"'Tis you that's the great boy, Shameen," murmured Una reverently, nestling closer to him; "great entirely. No other boy in Kilmeena can tell all about the stars above, and what the waters sing—and play it on your fiddle, too. And the Misty Burn. No, what is the Song of the Misty Burn, *a ghradh*?"

Her eyes smiled into his, and the lad drew himself

erect with the fiddle held under his chin, and the bow up-lifted.

“Nobody knows it but me,” he said proudly, “except the trout, and the wind, and the little grasses that grow on the banks. The fishers never hear it, for their hearts are hard to the fishes, and the Burn will not make music for them. Nor do the children hear it—the children who throw stones in to make the bubbles rise, for they drown the song with their noise. Only someone that sits quietly listening until it begins can catch it; so softly at first and so sweetly, then louder, and louder and louder, but it is always soft and sweet and sad. If you close your eyes you can hear it coming afar off down the little ripples.”

He drew the bow across the strings and began to play a quaint tremulous air. Then he broke into soft chanting like a lamentation:—

“Running water, running water, rippling all the day,
 ’Tis my grief for little Máire who is gone,
 Ah, the eyes your waves went over, when you swished
 and danced above her,
 Above the little *cailín bán!*

“Running water, running water, ’twas her flaxen hair
 Trailed like a net of gossamer in the dewy dawn
 Across your stones below, when they came and found
 her so,
 Found the little *cailín bán!*

“Running water, running water, her father cannot sleep,
 He listens to the wind at night, sobbing, sobbing on—
 And he hears her gasping breath who fought a fight
 with death.
Mo bhrón, his little cailín bán!

“Running water, running water, her mother’s heart is wild

For the clinging hand now cold, the cheek that’s wan,
For the child who was her pleasure; her golden store
and treasure,

Her little laughing *cailín bán!* ”

“Ah then but she was cold and white, little Máire Boyle, and dripping wet when they brought her home in the morning,” he mused—his song ended. “That’s why the Misty Burn is sad; for there was no harm, oh, no harm at all in little Máire, and no reason why she should die under the water, and she so small and young.”

Una looked at the boy wistfully. Her cheeks were pale because of his theme; but her pride in him shone out like a glory from her sweet blue eyes.

“That’s what the witch-woman knew was in you, *a ghradh*—only, only Shameen dear, don’t believe what she told you about the beautiful lady. Sure you won’t, sure you won’t? It’s me you love—me, and I’ll love you true and always. Kiss me, Shameen, again, again, again!”

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It was after this that Brien MacFelimy’s second wife put a stop to Una’s rambles over Gortawarla. “She is growing a big girl now,” she said to her husband, “and soon someone will be asking her to a home of her own. She must learn to milk and churn and spin like another woman. That mad boy of O’Cahan’s, with his fiddling and queer ways, is not fit company for her.”

She so filled Una’s days with work that the girl, when evening came, was fain to rest rather than climb the steep hill to the trysting-place. After a time the acute daily longing to see Shameen left her, but she saw him

in her dreams at night. Though his life was a secluded one in the remote Millhouse she still heard much of what concerned him. She knew of his wild sorrow when his father died and of his lonely life with old Molshie, his nurse, as sole companion. True, he had his books, and his Little Red Lark; but Una did not know how often he yearned for the playmate of his childhood and her quick loving sympathy, in those moments of depression which comes to weak and strong alike. Shameen had many a bitter dreary hour to himself in the stillness of the night, when sleep hovered afar, and the sharp stings of pain rent his body like the passage of a burning sword. Then he found that it needed all his resignation to thank God for existence. Sometimes, of a Sunday, Una and he met in the Chapel-yard, and walked gravely and slowly together down the lane. He still suffered from the lameness of his boyhood, though now he had no longer need of a crutch to help his steps. Una had grown into a pretty girl; the tangled red hair had been repressed into decorous coils, and the violet eyes had learned to keep their flashes of joy and glooms of sorrow hidden behind the veil of their long lashes. Speech was rare with her on these occasions; Shameen it was who poured out all his thoughts and longings as of old, while she listened to his every word with rapt attention. Perhaps her own thoughts were too sacred for words when he was near; so she moved discreetly by his side, content and blissful; loving that poor slight body of his with all the devotedness of her first pure love. He seemed to feel it intuitively, for his dark eyes were always tender when he turned them on her flower-face; but if he cherished a regard for her beyond that of mere affection born of their childish intimacy, he never appeared to realise it; he only knew that he was happier on those Sunday

strolls than at any other time, and with the knowledge of this momentary pleasure his period of introspection began and ended. The Glen's folk, looking after the boy and girl, shook their heads sagely. "He doesn't know his mind," they said, "though he is now his own master and can take his way. But she knows hers, does Una MacFelimy, if he would but speak the word." Yet no word of love came from his lips, and if she held a secret hope to her heart she gave no sign, only the little bright face grew paler in those days of suspense as she listened to the kindly commiseration that came, unwittingly, in indiscreet whisperings to her ear.

.

One wild evening in late autumn Shameen sat in his corner of the settle playing idly. He began several airs; but broke off impatiently after a bar or two of each. A fever of restlessness pervaded him; his pulse throbbed hotly. His thoughts went back to his childhood on Gortawarla, and the little playmate of those vanished days. She was a woman now, and he a man; though he could not run and leap, and shoulder the *camán* like the other men he knew. Ah, dear God, the pity of it! Yes, Una was a woman, a sweet wild rose—a winsome, lovely—ah, dear God, dear God!

His eyes grew dim as memory quickened, and in the corners of the old kitchen fantastic shadows danced beyond the flickering glow of the fire. Molshie knitted away placidly on her three-legged stool in the ingle.

He a man! Yes, Christ He sees—but a man lonely and unhappy often. "It is not good for man to be alone." True, true! But when a man is waiting for a prophecy to come to pass he can never be unhopeful, and never quite alone. And such a prophecy! What did

the fairy-woman say? "A *cailín* with a heart of gold and the soul of a dove, who will love you with a love that is strong as death." His beloved! He could picture her as he fancied her through all these years; tall, fair and pale, gray-eyed; the only colour in her face was on those smiling red lips; the flaxen hair of her was a sunny glory. She had kept his heart from other women, for how could he look upon a less when the star of all womanhood was his to win. Ah, send her soon, soon, dear God—the waiting is weary.

Outside, the rain lashed heavily against the shutters, and the Misty Burn sobbed as it swept, swelled high by the floods under the window. He bent his head to listen to the sough of the wind. A wild, wild night, and the leaves scurrying by with a patter like the footfall of fairy folk.

He lifted his bow, but before he could draw it across the strings a timid tap on the door caused him to start.

"Molshie, woman dear," he cried, "there's some poor creature knocking without. Open to whoever it is in God's name."

"In God's name I bid ye come out of the storm," said she, throwing the door wide.

The slender figure that entered came straight to the fire without a word. Her cloak was heavy with rain, a dark hood shrouded her face. Shameen peered at her through the uncertain light half in doubt.

"Is it Una MacFelimy?—Is it yourself that's in it, my girl?" His voice was full of bewilderment.

She threw back the cloak with an abruptness that left little streaks of rain-water upon the white hearthstone. He saw that the red curls were tossed and wet, also, and that above her flushed cheeks her eyes shone with unnatural brightness. Was it the rain that lay upon their lashes—or tears?

“Una, Una, what has brought you so far in the storm? Is all well with you, *a leanbh*? ”

She gave a little gasping cry, and threw out her hands towards him in supplication.

“Oh, Shameen Beag, is there a God above us, at all, at all? Tell me, tell me quick. Is He looking down on me this bitter night, or am *I* dreaming or mad? ”

“Come here, *a chailín óg*, come here,” he crossed to the fire and took her cold hands in his, tenderly.

“Sit beside me, *a ghradh*, and tell me your trouble.”

“Ah, not beside you, Shameen, yet awhile,” she said, sinking down on the floor near his seat. “This is how I used to sit with you when we were little. Don’t you remember? ”

He nodded silently.

“I haven’t been in this kitchen for years now, Shameen, not since I grew up, but it is as homely as ever, and as restful. There never was such a restful place in the world. The crickets made the only noise when the wheel was silent. I used to envy you and wish it was my home as well as yours.”

She leaned her elbow on the settle, and looked up wistfully into his face. Her lips trembled piteously.

“’Tis a sorrowful errand, Shameen, that is mine this night. But on earth there was no one I could come to only you. And they’ve forgotten me in heaven.”

“What is your sorrow, *giarsa*? ”

“They’re marrying me in the morning, Shameen.”

“*A leanbh! A leanbh!* ”

“Yes, in the morning, to Denis Freel, of Ardtrasna, over the mountain. Black Denis that has buried his second wife, and has sons as big and rough as himself. Black Denis, Shameen, and I never dreamt that when he came to bargain for my father’s cows it was on me his

eye had fallen. Oh, *Mhuire a's truagh!* I never dreamt—not the least little bit.”

Hitherto she had forced herself into a sort of calmness, but the pent-up tempest could not be restrained longer.

“I am so young, so young,” she wailed. “I begged them to let me stay and work and be happy, and I prayed to Mary and my dead mother; but none heeded me. They’re selling me to slavery and sorrow, Shameen; for it’s whispered that the other women died of heart-break. Oh, I could work for my bite and sup with the strangers if they would only leave me free—ay, work my fingers to the bone and be glad.”

“God help you, *a chailín óg*, God help you.”

She rose from where she crouched upon the floor, and came closer, kneeling by him.

“Is there a heart in you at all, Shameen Beag O’Cahan, that you can sit there and pity me? What good are your words? Will words comfort me when I’m wild with trouble, and this is my last night—my last night—in my father’s house. Ah, Shameen.”

Her sudden fierceness ended in a sob. She folded her arms on his knees and looked straight into his sad dark eyes.

“Have you forgotten Gortawarla, *a bhuachaill dubh?*” she whispered softly, “and the happy times we had together there? There was no one in the whole wide world I loved so well as you.”

“And I loved you, *a chailín deas.*”

“And when, many’s a time, the rain fell on us up in the heather who kept you dry and warm under the little frock she took off herself, because you were a dawny boy?”

“You—’twas you, *a ghradh.*”

“And when the pain came on you from your poor hurt

limb, who cried because she could not bear it instead—cried and cried till her heart grew sore? ”

“ Oh, Una, *mo mhuirín*, ’twas you.”

“ And who,” her eyes burned now, “ stood in front of you that day the wild bull of Manus Mór’s met us on the Ridge, until she felt his breath on her face, and his cruel sharp horns almost against her before Big Manus came? ”

“ Who but you, *a stóir*—who but you? ”

“ And is it only words of pity you have for me, Shameen O’Cahan, after that? ”

Her eyes held his steadily. For a moment an answering passion seemed to kindle in his dark young face; then he paled somewhat, and drew back in embarrassment.

“ Is that all, I ask you? ” Una repeated bitterly. “ All, Shameen Beag? ”

He looked at her as if he scarcely understood, and lifting up his fiddle again, drew the bow sharply across the strings.

“ All,” he replied reluctantly. “ What can I do or say more than I have done? The fault isn’t mine, Una, but theirs that bargained you to the widow-man.”

At this her hands clenched wildly, and she rocked to and fro in a tortured silence. Shameen gazed down on the bowed head of curls, for her face was hidden. Then she rose, pallid as death, but tearless, and threw the heavy cloak around her once more.

“ God sees,” said old Molshie, “ that you can’t go out in that storm, *a leanbh*. Stay the night and sleep in my bed.”

The girl laughed. “ It is my way home I must be taking, instead, good woman—my thanks to you, all the same. And my blessing on you, Shameen O’Cahan, for the comfort you’ve given me this night.”

She opened the door hastily, and passed out into the darkness. A shudder shook the house as gust after gust hurled itself against the walls. The rain came sweeping in sheets down the valley, but Una set her face to meet it and walked steadily on. Her heart was a dead thing in her breast; she no longer felt the whip of the rain or the buffetting of the storm.

Shameen, as she stepped across the threshold, had half-arisen. His hands went out towards her. "*A chailín, a chailín óg*, do not go," trembled on his lips. "Stay, *a leanbh*," but the door-leaf shut with a clash behind her, and his words were lost in the noise.

He drew his fingers wearily across his brow. "Maybe 'tis better so," he murmured, "since it is bespoke I am already. But, oh! poor little Una—my grief—my grief."

.

It was when the red of her hair had faded into gray, and the uprightness had left her still slender form, that Una streaked her husband for his burial. He had been a hard man, and had died hard. Her life with him was sordid and weary, crowded with daily duties which she fulfilled in an uncomplaining listlessness. No children were born to her, and for that she thanked heaven. Had there been—she shuddered to hear the rough man cursing his labourers outside—the sons would have partaken of their father's vices perhaps; and the daughters—what was before them save a life such as she herself had known in that riotous household? Yes, through all her misery she thanked God for this blessing withheld.

Occasionally, news reached her from the other side of the mountain, carried thither by pedlars and travelling women. Her ears were keen to listen, as she moved through the kitchen quietly, and her heart leapt almost

to suffocation at the sound of one dear name. It was then she learned how Shameen fared, and she wondered that he still lived alone. She was jealously glad of his loneliness, although she pitied him for it. "The prophecy hasn't come true, then," she would whisper to herself. "The fairy-woman had other meaning for what she told him, maybe. Oh, pulse o' my heart, nad you only loved me instead." No one heard her cry, it had its beginning and ending in her patient soul.

At the wake of Black Denis she knew that desolation lay heavy indeed upon Shameen O'Cahan. "He is bed-ridden now, the poor crathur, the little strength he had has given way at last," one told her. "The neighbours go in and out to him, but 'tis little they can do."

When the sods were heaped upon her husband's grave, Una gathered her scanty belongings and bade farewell to his family. "I am going back to my own people," she told them, "and I want nothing from you but the clothes I wear. Whatever your father left to me can be divided amongst you."

But it was not to the house where she was born, and where she had known her first, and bitterest, sorrow, the pale woman went. She set her feet straight for the goal of her heart, and the gladness in Shameen's eyes was her recompense as she bent above him.

"Is it an angel from heaven, or Una come back to me?" he whispered, holding her hand.

She had no voice to speak—the tears were too near.

"Una, *a ghradh*, you will never leave me again?"

"Never again, Shameen, never again."

"Oh, God be thanked, *mo mhuirnin*. God and Mary, be thanked."

There were no gossiping tongues to insult her in that peaceful valley; for each and all valued her sacrifice at

its true worth. So she stayed on tending him through the days that followed ; tending him with a love and devotedness that saw in his increasing querulousness only something that touched her motherliness to the core. He had power to hurt her still, as when he regretted his lost youth, and the non-realisation of the ideal he had treasured through so many years of suffering.

“I was not able to go out into the world and seek her,” he would say. “So she grew tired of waiting for me, and I have missed her for ever.”

There came a time, all too soon to the weary watcher, when he seemed to forget this fancy. Una felt sorrowfully then that the end was nearing. Her heart had been torn between love and pity ; for his pain was so great and prolonged at periods, that she prayed he might be taken and relieved, but at other times she could only think of her loss and yearn to keep him still.

The last night of his life, as she knelt beside him, he begged her to prop him up and lay the fiddle to his hand. She did so, wondering. Raising the bow, with the flourish she used to smile at in the old days, he played, one after the other, his childish compositions, never missing a note ; with his head bent forward as if listening to an echo of them somewhere. Suddenly he laid down the bow and looked into her upturned eyes. His own were very bright, the glow of youth seemed alight again on his face.

“Have I found you at last, *a dhílis?*” he cried eagerly. “*A chuisle mo chroidhe*, my own, my own. Put your dear hand in mine, my treasure, and say you love me.”

Una obeyed him, and in her eyes he read her thought that his mind was wandering.

“No, Una *a stóir*, not that, not that. It is my mind

that is clear at last, and I see now what I have been blind to so long. It was you I waited for, and yours are the eyes I saw that day my dream first came to me. I have lost the joy of life because I followed the dream, and did not see my true star shining within my reach. Lay my head close to your heart, now, *a chailín óg*. Closer, closer. We will be parted soon. Say you forgive me, *Una mo chroidhc!* ”

“ Oh, Shameen, dear,” she moaned, “ don’t break my heart entirely.”

“ Ah, the fond, fond heart it was always, Una. And I was so unworthy. But maybe God will make it up to us beyond the grave.”

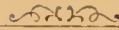
He turned half round with a restless movement, and a sigh, and she heard him mutter drowsily :

“ ’Tis the beautiful fiddle surely—the sweet little fiddle she is, my Little Red Lark. Oh, sorra the little fiddle’s like her in the whole country. She’s my treasure ; and listen, listen fiddle *a rúin*—’tis my heart’s song you’ll be singing when I play on you. What will Una Mac-Felimy think, fiddle, *a stóir*, when she hears me and you together?—when—she—hears——”

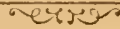
His voice trailed off into silence, and when, in an agony of dread, Una lifted her white face from the pillow, she was alone with her sorrow.

Then through the stillness before dawn, there came to her, like a *caoin*, the sound of running water over the stones of the Misty Burn.

THE END.



Printed by An Cló-Éumann, Ltd., Great Strand Street, Dublin



ETHNA CARBERY'S POEMS.



ONE of the most remarkable things in the Irish book world during recent years, has been the phenomenally rapid sales and wide appreciation of Ethna Carbery's poems, "The Four Winds of Eirinn," which, being published only eleven months, has gone into its Tenth Edition. Probably no book in recent years was received with such enthusiastic praise by critics of all ways of thinking. Extracts from a few of the opinions expressed are here given.

The mysterious Fiona Mac Leod, in an article upon the book in the *Fortnightly Review*, said :—

"One Copy of such a book as "The Four Winds of Eirinn" is enough to light many unseen fires. . . . In essential poetic faculty Ethna Carbery stands high among the Irish poets of to-day. In this respect indeed she falls behind none save Mr. Yeats and "A.E."; and as an Irish writer for an Irish public, I doubt if any of those just named has more intimately reached the heart of the people. Than Mr. Yeats, Ethna Carbery, while not less saturated with the Gaelic atmosphere, possesses a simplicity of thought and diction foreign to the most subtle of contemporary poets. . . . Her earliest as her latest verse has the quality of song and the vibration of poetry. And from first to last there is in it the Gaelic note so distinctive from any other note; here Ethna Carbery is Irish in a sense in which the other women poets of her hour and nation cannot claim to be. . . . One may quote from each poem in the book. All are Gaelic in mould of thought and colour of art. Perhaps the poems which longest will lie close to the Irish heart are those which show the shadow of Irish sorrow and the rainbow gleam of Irish hope—that sorrow and that hope which, from the grey glens of Donegal to Kerry of the Kings, inspire all the songs that are sung, and all that is imperishable in the Nation's heart."

"Many weary days shall pass, and years will be counted by the score, before the touches of Ethna Carbery's genius, the wail of her song, and the music of her lyre, will be forgotten.

She has touched a chord that must needs awaken the hearts of Erin's sons and daughters the wide world over. In her poems the spirit of the Nation is once more revived, and the utterance she has given it shall be re-echoed from afar. She has lit the torch of hope in a good cause, and of faith and confidence in the brawny arms of her countrymen at home, and in the determination of many an exiled son."—THE LEADER (San Francisco).

"This is the most charming volume of poems published in Ireland, or out of it, for many a long day. . . . A beautiful monument, 'tis true, and far more enduring than carved granite of Donegal. . . . The dominant notes are, tenderness, truth, and a passionate love of country. Here are love songs as Irish as the singer's heart. . . . Ethna Carbery's poems alternately bring tears to one's eyes, and quicken the blood in one's veins. . . . There are few phases of Irish life, history, or legend, that her many-sided genius did not adorn."—THE IRISH PEOPLE.

"Steeped to the lips in the legendary lore of Ireland, she lived in a world of imagination, which had its roots in the past, and its hopes and ideas in the future. . . . While in this book we move from wonder to wonder, nowhere are we distracted or tortured by the misshapen fantasies of a sickly brain. It is natural magic in the truest sense of the word. No less remarkable than the prodigality of fancy is the richness and variety of melody which animate its sounds. They are purely lyric in quality and form. The music is everywhere true, and as full as it is new. One marvels at the spontaneousness of every thought and every word. With as little effort, or premeditation, as the birds in the Land of Perpetual Youth, sang this gifted child of Irish song. This must not be taken to imply that there is no art in her verses; but her art is the art of nature; an instinct rather than an acquisition. Anna MacManus, one feels in reading this volume, sang with an intensity which must inevitably have consumed the vital energies in a short space of time."—THE DAILY NEWS.

"Her songs are a heritage for all people and for all time, and we are proud and glad to claim her as our own child to-day."—THE NORTHERN WHIG.

"In this book we hear the pathetic voice of National love and aspiration, embalmed in true song. There is no trace of poetic imitation in her work. It is not easy to name a new, or a late poet—and perhaps none since Jean Ingelow—whose verse is so essentially melodious as Ethna Carbery's. . . . As Emerson says, the titles are half poems."—THE NEW YORK TIMES.

"Wherever a true son or daughter of Ireland is to be found, at home or abroad, a heartfelt welcome will be extended to this

exquisite book of verse. Her genius is so unmistakable that none could deny its existence even if they were not in sympathy with her sentiments. No one who has been swayed by the passion of patriotism, no one who has learned to know the meaning of love, and drank of its bitter-sweet draught, can fail to feel their heart's fibres stir as they read the words wafted to them on THE FOUR WINDS OF EIRINN. . . . Many moods find expression in the poems—mystical and simple, lofty and humble, passionate and tender; but every mood gives expression to the sympathy of the country. The voice of Ireland speaks to us through the singer. There is not a line in the book that is not full of interest and beauty and charm. Few books have been published of late years of such merit, and possessing such strong claims on the Irish public.”—THE IRISH WEEKLY INDEPENDENT.

“Ireland incarnate—Ethna Carbery sang of its beauty, its joys, its sorrows, with a wistful hope, like a pathetic little heart-break, running through all her songs. It is a chord more noticeable now that she has laid aside the lute for ever; though the music she gave the world still sings on in the hearts of others. Her personality, as seen through her work, is peculiarly like that of the Southern women of Dixie Land—so rich is it in hope, faith, love, and loyalty; so unswerving in devotion to duty. Women with Ethna Carbery's talent and loyalty are so rare, and the world needs them so much, that their loss is keenly felt. Yet there is this comfort:—Their deeds, their patriotism, and the courage they inspire, will live on for ever.” THE MEMPHIS SCIMITAR (Tenn., U.S.A.).

“The wide sympathy with which she wrote, the tender delicate touches that revealed the hidden beauty, . . . She was herself a poem incarnate; tender and sweet, and true and pure, gracious and refined as one of her Irish princesses, and kindly as one of her peasants. God gave her grand, rare gifts, and she dedicated them to a high, holy cause. Her life was all too short, but her works will live after her for all time.”—THE UNITED IRISHMAN.

“Those who knew her only through her writings loved her so much that her name came to their lips every time their thoughts turned to Irish Ireland.”—THE SOUTHERN CROSS (Buenos Ayres).

“Here is given to the Irish race a memorial, which they should dearly prize, of one of Ireland's truest and most loving singers—of her whose poems have enkindled and fed in other bosoms the sacred fire of love of Ireland, and of all that was truly Irish.”—THE IRISH EMERALD.

“The poems herein enshrined are vibrant with a passionate love of the Land of the Gael; instinct with the Gaelic spirit,

saturated with Gaelic legend, breathe true Gaelic mysticism and spirituality; tell of Gaelic valour, heroism, love; and fear not to couple the names of God, and Mary His Mother, of Patrick, Bridget and Columcille.”—THE IRISH CATHOLIC.

“This is the song book of one who lived and worked for her country, who strenuously tried to keep alive in youthful and manly hearts the hope for freedom, and the aspiration after fine ideals; of one who was a source of helpfulness, and joy, and enthusiasm.”—THE FREEMAN’S JOURNAL.

“The book is indeed full of beauty, and that bright spirit of hope which was part of Ethna Carbery’s nature. In herself she represented the new forces which are weaving light and colour into the life of the land. The destiny of Ireland was no mournful destiny to her. Her clear vision lifts itself above the caoiners of the centuries, she moves in Red Hugh’s triumphs, and sees the grandeur of the past. Forward she beholds the dawning light, and heralds it with song. . . . Ethna Carbery had that insight into hidden and spiritual things, the possession of which is the mark of a true poet. . . . The Four Winds of which she sang brought her voices from dun and rath, from fairy mound and ruined castle, from high Aileach of the sleeping heroes, from royal Tara and the cairn of kings. And what she heard, her subtle and delicate fancy re-shaped, and set forth in lasting form. Her love-songs are full of tender and exquisite expression, as if to her the birds of Angus Og had revealed the inmost soul of love and beauty. In her more mystical poems there is a glamour, a vision of beauty caught in glimpses, a reticence and mystery.”—THE IRISH DAILY INDEPENDENT.

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A second volume of Ethna Carbery’s stories will appear next season.

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Mac Manus

